HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Demon Hunter
The Used
Day Of Fire
Owl City poster
Fair
Queens Club
Mattie Montgomery
Readers' Poll Winners

FLATFOOT 56

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March, April 2010 • *Issue #142*
$3.99 USA / 4.50 CDN

DEMON HUNTER

THE·WORLD·IS·Λ·THORN

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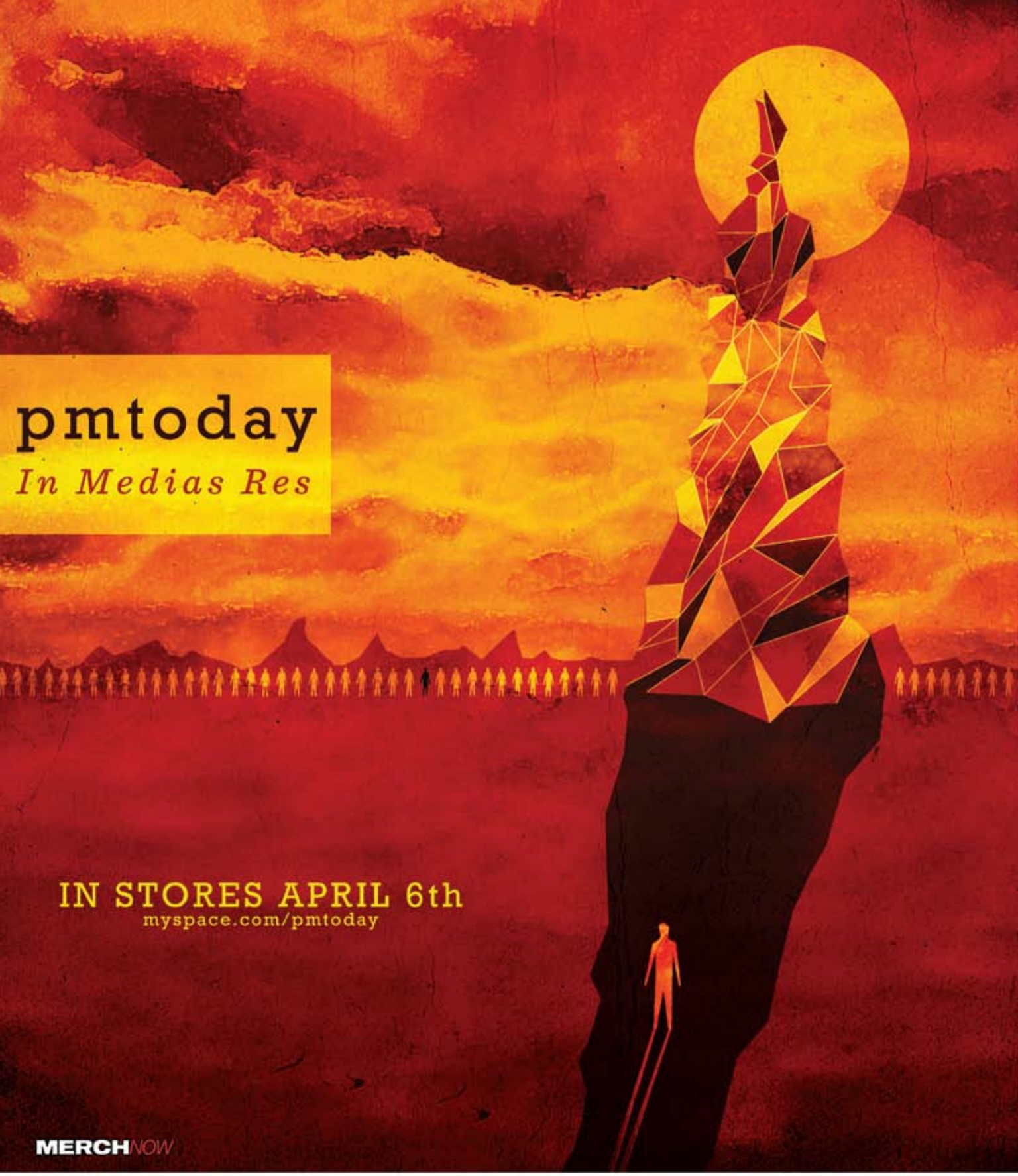
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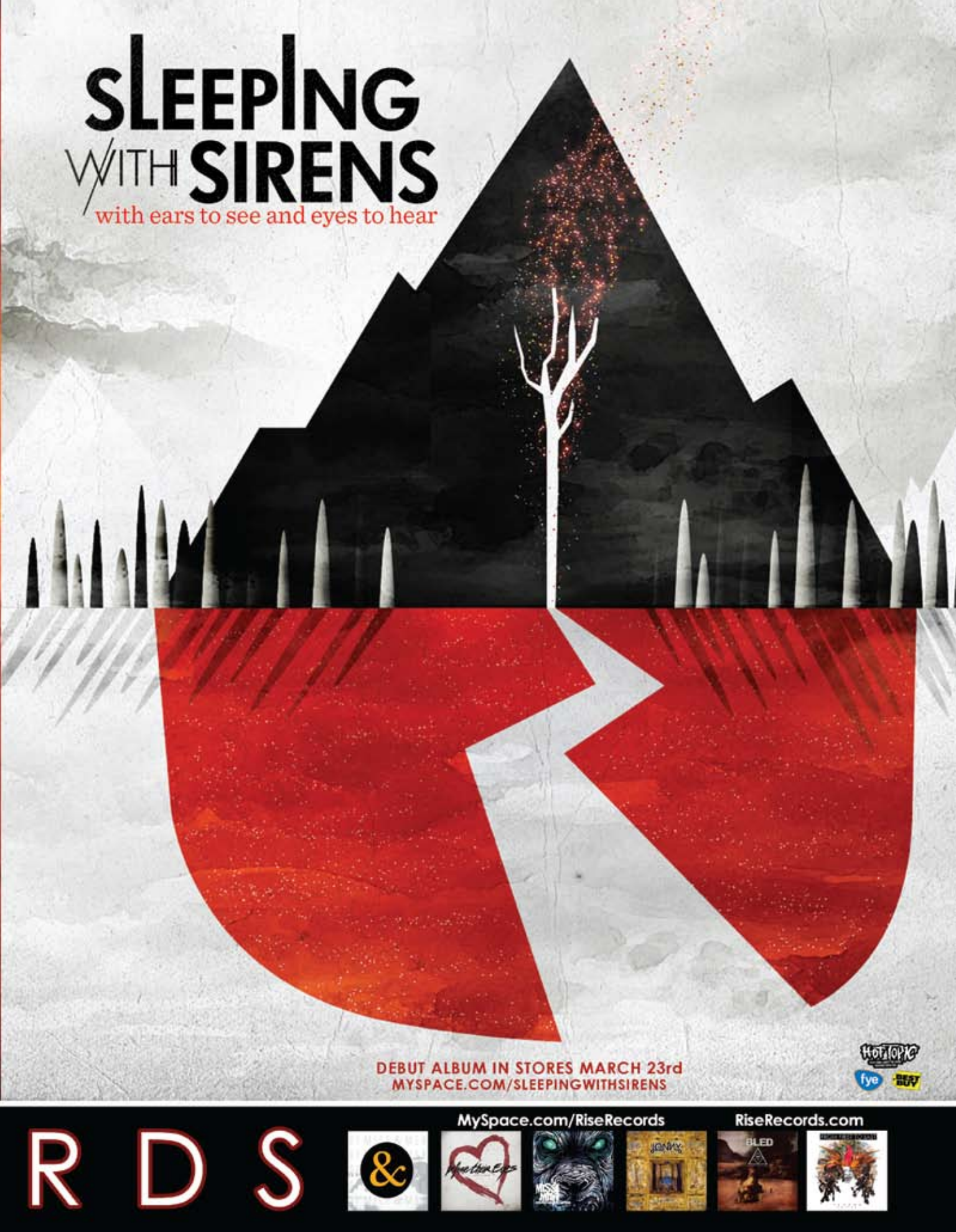
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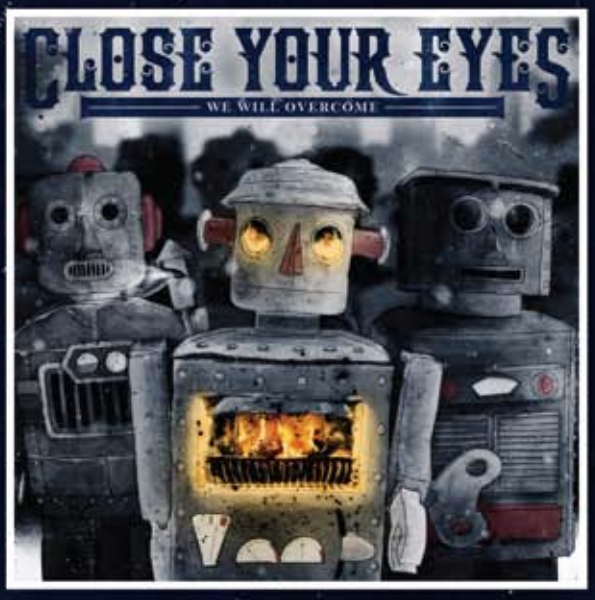

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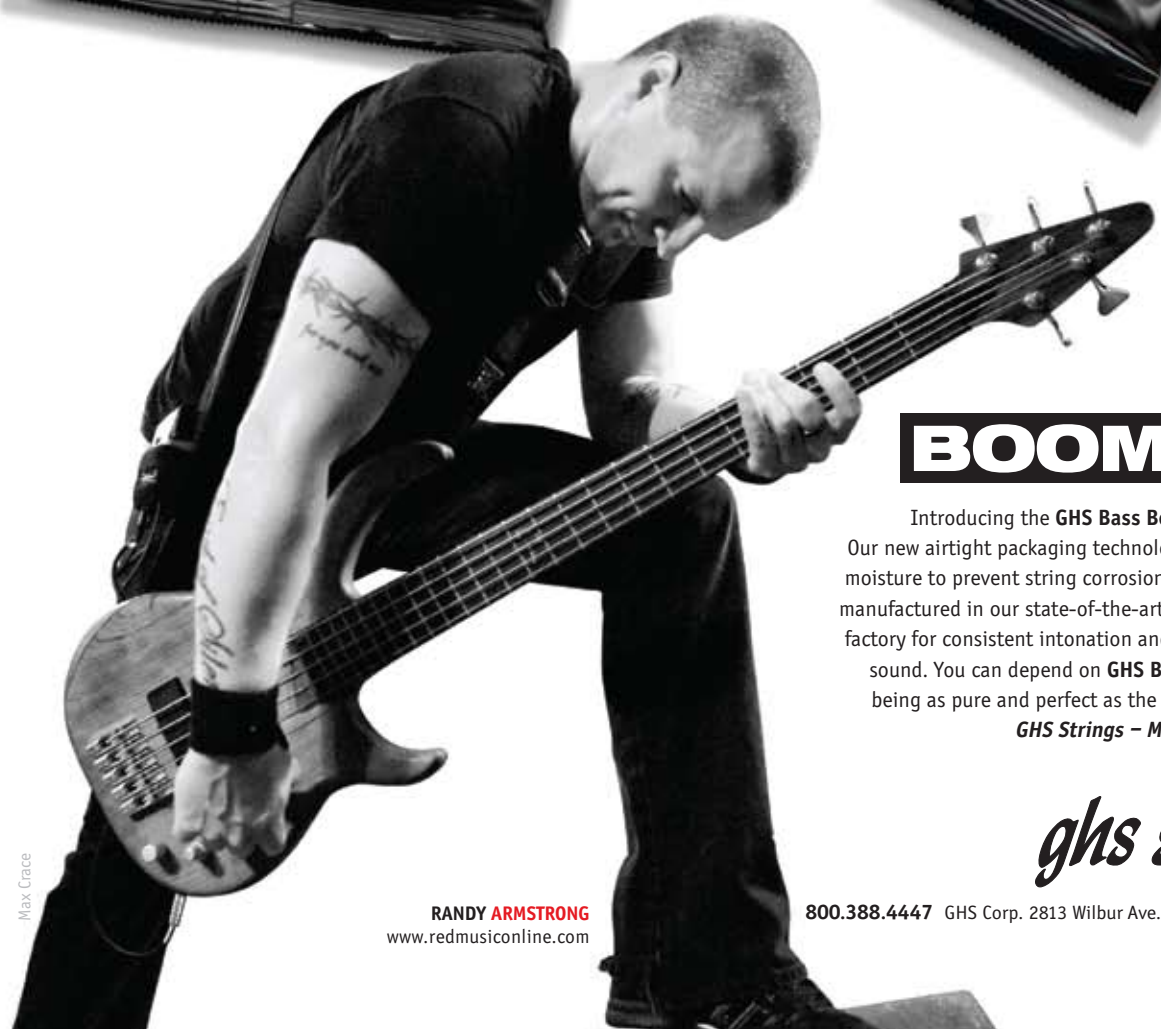

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE HM

I've seen magazines come and go in the time I've been editing HM. Metal Edge, which started the same year we did (1985) folded up last year, joining a growing list of music magazines that includes CCM Magazine. In April of 2008 I went to the Nashville party CCM threw for its friends as a way of saying goodbye to print. I saw John Styll, who founded the magazine in 1978 and was often available to me over the years to answer questions and offer advice about publishing magazines. I asked him, "How does it feel to watch your baby cease printing?" And he expressed frustration that it ended so close to its 30-year anniversary. "They were only 3 issues away from its 30th Anniversary issue." I immediately thought of where I'd be two short years later. I hoped I wouldn't face the same fate. I've done lots of soul searching and seeking the face of the Lord. I do not think it's time to give up this publication or go all digital. I'm in the thick of a fight and struggle to keep it going. But I need your help. This past year has seen a drastic dip in advertising sales, which is our major source of income (and we depend upon it to pay those large print bills). To keep the magazine printing, we went into debt. We found ways to cut our overhead and have done about everything we can think of to lower our operating costs. I think I've figured out a way to survive and actually grow again, but we need to get out from under this debt before it crushes us. Will you help? We are not a non-profit group (although it's something we've explored), so your gift will not be tax-deductible. You've probably seen other people or organizations say this, but it's true that every little bit helps. Sometimes breaking it down to manageable chunks makes it easier to consider. If everyone on our list gave $5, we'd be out of debt and in a much better position to succeed in a strained magazine & music economy. Would you pray about what to give? Last year I saw my friends at Paste Magazine send out an appeal similar to this. They were able to meet their goals and look to survive. Thanks to many musician and label friends, we have some gifts to offer as a way of saying "Thanks" to anyone who donates. We've collected and are still collecting rare, unavailable-in-stores or just plain cool tunes. Artists like Sleeping At Last, Mortification, Men As Trees Walking, White Collar Sideshow and John Davis/Superdrag. I'm still collecting tunes, so please log in to hmmag.com/faqsupport/ to check out the latest information with this campaign (and see a full song list). And please consider doing some other things to help, too, like promoting HM Magazine at stores, to youth groups, pastors, friends, etc. If you know people that could benefit from marketing to HM's audience, encourage them to contact us. Thanks for your help. I can't do it without you.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

VARIOUS ARTISTS	*RFL Playlist 2010*	Rock For Life's latest rockin' sampler CD.
TREVOR GIULIANI	*Subcontrario*	Fun, lilting acoustic stories.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*6 New Songs*	VBM new music sampler. Dig Kissing Cuz.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Saw VI Soundtrack*	The Memphis May Fire track is cool.
ANTIDEMON	*Satanichaos*	Brazilian death metal. *Heaven's Metal* cover act.
FOR TODAY	*Portraits*	Appreciating the band's musical maturity & 'tude.
OWL CITY	*Ocean Eyes*	Who isn't addicted to this joyous music?

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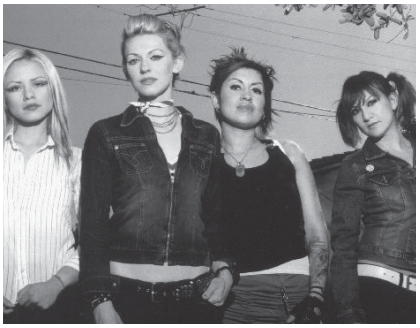

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

I haven't seen HM in a while, but know sometimes in the news section you update on older artists. Whatever happened to the Christian music magazine *This Prophecy*? Whatever happened to the guys in Crux? Prodigal Sons? The Halo Friendlies? I'm just an old-school guy reminiscing about the past.
–Michael McMinn, via iPhone

Ed – Thanks to some help from Daniel, we have some answers for you. Crux – According to their myspace, the band played their last show on January 8th, 2010. There are video clips and songs on their myspace. [myspace.com/cruxhc]

The Prodigal Son – They are still active working on their next record which will be named The Land of Nightmares. [myspace.com/theprodigalsonband] The band doesn't seem to be playing any shows. Their last show was Halloween of last year.

Halo Friendlies (pictured above) – The band is on hiatus right now and currently the bass player is playing with the Smashing Pumpkins and is engaged to Gwen Stefani's touring keyboardist. October 17, 2009 was the day she gave birth to a baby girl.

(For future reference, you might try MySpace. It seems to be a good resource for information on some older bands.)

ULTIMATUM PRIZE REVIEW

Hey, thanks for the Ultimatum CD!! I've never won anything like this in my life, so I was super stoked when I saw a package that said HM in the mailbox. I'm so happy right now it's not even funny. Ha,ha... You guys are awesome. Thank you!
–Ciana Benedict, via Blackberry

Ed – That's what you get for answering the weekly enewsletter trivia question correctly! It's kind of like a government conspiracy, only not...

COUNTRY MUSIC HATRED?

I'd like to know why the Cornerstone Christian music festival doesn't book inspirational country gospel bands or artists. Would you look into it and help them not to overlook a large fan base?
–Rob Charles, via internet

Ed – While Cornerstone Festival has a very broad musical scope (and they even had Charlie Daniels on the mainstage a few years ago), I think they try to cater to what they know is hot ... and I imagine they're like me and favor rock and edgy stuff so much that some of the "lighter" sides of music get left out. They probably shouldn't have every style, ya know? My other thought is that it's a government conspiracy.

PROMO SWAG APPRECIATED

We just received your magazines and stickers for our youth outreach this week. We really appreciate it! Thanks again. It really means a lot to us.
–Laura Shaffer, via internet

WEB SIGHTINGS

Not sure how long since the site has been redesigned, but it is good! Great job and thanks for what you do.
–Nick Chapman, via internet

Ed – Thanks heaps for the encouragement!

WARTS COME FROM WORRY

Due to recent e-mail, and previous hints, do you think HM is going to move forward (soon) and go all digital, with no mailing of (the) print magazine? Yeah, I'm a bit worried. Do you think this is a few months out? A year? Or never will?
–Bill Cavanaugh, via internet

Ed – "Bill, Bill," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Okay, I'm just kiddin' ya, Bill, referencing the story about Martha worrying so much. The Lord does tell us not "to be anxious about anything..." but to pray about everything. To answer your question, though (finally), I have no plans to go out-of-print or online only. I don't think that "model" would work out too well. I have been worried, too, to be honest, but I believe God is not done with HM Magazine just yet, so I'm working hard to keep it going in spite of the economic hardships we are facing. See my editor's note on the previous page for more information on that. Besides kidding with you, I appreciate you asking. Thanks, Bill!

HM

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SCRIPTURE "The Lord will reign for ever and ever." (Exodus 15:18)

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HARDNEWS
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EX-EXTOL MEMBERS SHRED ON
NEW MANTRIC ALBUM HITS IN APRIL

The album *The Descent* will be released worldwide by Prosthetic Records in the beginning of April. "We are truly satisfied with ending up signing with Prosthetic records!" reports Tor Magne. "Our first album using the Mantric name does (to our ears) deserve to get out to lovers of hard music all over the world, and Prosthetic makes this possible. We also feel honored to be amongst the quality and variety represented by the bands signed to Prosthetic. Our music embraces creativity and originality outside the limits of narrow genres, so it suits us fine to deal with a label that also values this. This is a release that is both accessible and original, catchy and complex at the same time, and we can't wait to get it out!" You guys aren't the only ones that'll be glad to see this distributed everywhere...

MICAH SANNAN
WEIRD INFECTION SPREADS

Micah Sannan of Disciple has had three surgeries for an infection that has mysteriously spread from his right jaw to the entire right side of his head. The band is asking for prayers and donations of any amount to help cover health costs for Micah. Donations will be taken at shows and can also be sent (with "Get Well" cards) to:

Platform Artist Management
Attn: Micah Sannan
256 Seaboard Lane, Suite C-103
Franklin, TN 37067

We Are The Fallen schedule live debut in UK

Their worldwide live debut will take place at Kings College in London on March 23rd. This band is comprised of original members of Evanescence, guitarists Ben Moody and John LeCompt, along with drummer Rocky Gray, joined by charismatic American Idol finalist Carly Smithson on vocals. Acclaimed bassist Marty O'Brien (Disturbed and Static-X, among others) rounds out We Are The Fallen's unique sound. The group will then return to the U.S. to give fans a live taste of the repertoire fueling their upcoming debut album, due out later in the year – hitting the road in support of H.I.M. The extensive, 28-city tour launches in Philadelphia, PA, on March 26th. The band's first single "Bury Me Alive" is available digitally. Guitarist Ben Moody has been publicly crediting the group's unique chemistry as the driving force behind We Are The Fallen, describing Carly Smithson's role as a "true partner," and a key component to We Are The Fallen's overall sound. The guys in Living Sacrifice all told me that they predict this band will explode (just like their other one did). While not a "Christian band," per se, it'll surely be an interesting one to watch.

News bullets

The Juliana Theory is reuniting since their break up in February of '06. The band is only doing two shows in the summer of 2010.

Miley Cyrus is suing **The Fold** for their parody of her song "Party in the U.S.A."

Destroy the Runner has made available their unreleased track "Sinners" for download on all major music download websites such as amazon, iTunes and Rhapsody.

Paramore is headlining a spring tour with **Relient K** and **Fun.**, starting March 26.

Tumbledown, Mike Herrera's cowpunk band, are hitting the road for a month-long tour in March.

Spoken's **Jef Cunningham** has left the band. He released this on Facebook: "I have left the band Spoken. I wish nothing but the best for the band that I gave the last 14 years of my life to."

The name of **As I Lay Dying**'s fourth album on Metal Blade Records will be *The Powerless Rise*. It is being produced by Adam D of Killswitch Engage. A headlining tour is being set at the same time of the album release, which will be spring of 2010.

Pre-order for **Demon Hunter**'s *The World Is A Thorn* is now available. This includes both regular and deluxe editions. Check out Solid State's website for a bundle package deal.

Call To Preserve will be doing an international tour with Agnostic Front from late March through late April.

Trans-Siberian Orchestra has been named one of *Billboard*'s "Top 25 Touring Artists of the Decade." TSO's spring tour begins March 25 through May 2.

Flatfoot 56 will be touring this spring with **Project 86** and have confirmed dates on *Warped Tour*.

The Classic Crime will be donating all profits from the pre-orders of their third album *Vagabonds* to a nonprofit organization called Jesus In Haiti Ministries. The band visited Haiti seven months before the earthquake struck.

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War of Ages

BY DANIEL GARCIA

By this time you should know the band War Of Ages in some sense. The Pennsylvania metal act have come a long way from forming the band in a garage that belongs to lead vocalist Leroy Hamp's parents, which had no heat or air conditioning when needed, to sharing the stage with big metal acts such as Soilwork and Bleeding Through.

"We didn't have a dollar to our names and not one contact in the music world," Hamp says. "Yet all we wanted to do was write music using the talents God has given us and glorify Him with them." In many cases Christian bands take great joy when given a chance to be exposed to a secular audience. As the band's name grew bigger, it opened doors to play in front of audiences with distorted views of religion and in most cases atheist beliefs. Being on tour with Throwdown gave them the chance to play in one of their first large-scale secular crowds and every time the people would go nuts. With this excitement it was important to remember to keep the faith strong and not let pride sneak in.

"Faith will always be tested no matter what we do with our lives. Jesus was tested in the desert for 40 days. We've been tested and hit with everything including the kitchen sink, yet we've stood strong to this day and have put God first."

War Of Ages has been able to minister to secular audiences but not in a traditional way. During one of their tours a kid walked up to the band and said, "I don't believe in that whole God thing, but your music is cool."

"I think sometimes we as Christians put so much into the harvest that we forget about planting and watering," adds Hamp. "The harvest belongs to God and we should be thankful He lets us see (it) from time to time."

The band has been busy with completing their fourth album *Eternal*. More so than *Arise And Conquer,* it will include singing, which the band believes will bring out the emotion and feeling for certain songs. With the album still being fast and heavy, the tracks will feel like battles after battles that the band has faced in their daily lives.

"This album is the most climactic album we have ever written showing anger, sadness, relief, pain and every other emotion we've encountered." As War Of Ages continues to do their work, they have maintained its original vision. However as a band they believe it is easy to fall into the habit of competition with other bands in who has the coolest t-shirt rather than focusing on the true battle of bringing the love of God to a world engulfed in darkness.

Realizing the talents that God has given them, War Of Ages is fully aware they require new responsibilities. As a testimony to the band they have chosen 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 to represent themselves. "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

House of Heroes plans to begin working on new material at presstime with producer Mark Townsend (Deas Vail, Relient K).

"Fire it Up" by **Thousand Foot Krutch** was played at the Super Bowl XLIV. It was used for a hype video being played on a jumbotron. The song has also been used for movie trailers and numerous sports teams for their starting lineups.

Fans of **Five Iron Frenzy** will be able to pre-order the long-awaited Double-DVD along with a combo pack on fifdvd.com. Online orders will be shipped out on the 2nd of March and will be available in stores on the 16th of the same month.

Faith Factor has added keyboardist **David Peters** to their lineup and will have his music skills shown on a Deliverance tribute CD.

Roxx Productions signs **Crystavox**. The band will be releasing remixed and remastered versions of their songs in a set titled *The 20 Year Mix*. It will include a DVD and a "Best Of" album. Release date is set for May 25, 2010.

Me In Motion has big plans for 2010 that includes joining *The Nothing & Everything Tour* with RED and Pillar and releasing their debut self-titled album on Centricity Music. The album is set for March 23rd.

Manny Contreras and **Isaac Bueno** have called it quits with **Impending Doom** on reasons of feeling the band was not for them anymore. Everyone involved are on good terms and the band is currently working on their third album with Facedown Records. "We are still great friends with both Manny and Isaac and wish them both nothing but the best," states frontman **David Sitting**. "Our good friend **Brandon Trahan** (ex-Mirror of Dead Faces) has stepped in on drums and just recently finished tracking on our upcoming record, which will be released this summer."

Abandon Kansas has released a music video for their song "Close Your Eyes" with Gotee Records.

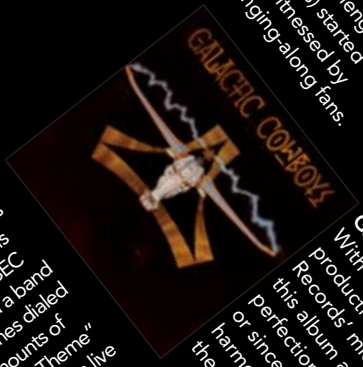
Deas Vail joins the **Owl City** tour that covers much of the U.S. through the middle of April.

CLASSIC MOMENTS IN CHRISTIAN ROCK

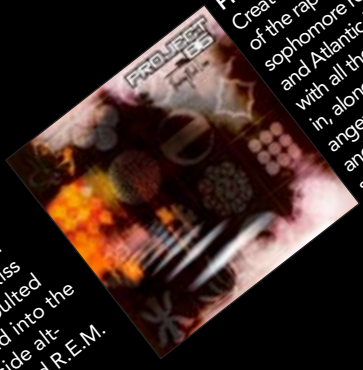
Maylene & the Sons of Disaster | I
Reappearing after departing from Underoath a few years later with a new band and a renewed vigor for live touring, Dallas Taylor turned the hard music world on its ear with the band's Southern Metal hybrid, conjuring a strange mash-up of Skynyrd and Hatebreed.

Blindside | *A Thought Crushed My Mind*
This second set from these Swedes found them with enough experience under their musical belt to outshine their self-titled debut, but to also retain that youthful vigor and spit to truly compete with Refused. ("King of the Closet" remains a staple in their live show today.)

Dashboard Confessional | *The Places You Have Come To Fear The Most*
After leaving Christian emo band Further Seems Forever and releasing The Drowning EP and Swiss Army Romance, Chris Carrabba (on this full-length for Vagrant Records) started a phenomenon witnessed by thousands of singing-along fans.



Galactic Cowboys | S/T
With Sam Taylor's genius production touch and Geffen Records' micro-management, this album attained a sonic perfection unmatched before or since. Imagine the swirling harmonies of the Beatles and the crushing riffs of Metallica.



Project 86 | *Drawing Black Lines*
Created during the formative years of the raprock/rapcore scene, this sophomore release (on both BEC and Atlantic Records) found a band with all the right guitar tones dialed in, along with potent amounts of anger and energy. "Stein's Theme" and "One-Armed Man" remain live staples a decade later.

Sixpence None The Ricker | S/T
Known as the album that launched a platinum career (with the mega-single "Kiss Me"), this album catapulted this alt-soft-rock band into the mainstream, alongside alt-darlings The Pixies and R.E.M.

Petra | *Back to the Streets*
This Christian rock pioneering band had just lost its longtime vocalist, but his replacement was a midwest classic rock hero named John Schlitt (Head East). Coupled with the stellar arena rock production of the Elefante brothers, these songs arguably found the band at its peak.

Mortification | *Scrolls of the Megilloth*
This album epitomized the genre of death metal/grindcore and was so good that it's almost become a noose around the band's neck, setting a standard they've since attempted to achieve. "No one but Jayson Sherlock can play these tunes," describes growling vocalist Steve Rowe.

MUTEMATH | S/T
With a delayed release amidst a lawsuit about being marketed into the Christian market, this album showcased all the potential of their *Reset* EP ... and then some. Fusing the experimentation of Radiohead with the pop sensibilities (and vocal sound) of Sting, every song here kills (and are still part of their live set).

Stavesacre | *Speakeasy*
Possibly the first real Christian hard music supergroup, this emotionally charged heavy rock band jelled at just the right time with epic songs like "Sundown Motel," "Gold and Silver," "Minuteman" and "Freefall," becoming a soundtrack to a generation.

If you recall, early last year we started spotlighting two classic albums in Christian rock's history per issue, as a way to point towards our upcoming 25th Anniversary Issue this July (where we'll unveil a list of the top 100 Christian rock albums of all time). We've talked about the importance of albums by Mortal (*Realworm*), Deliverance (*Weapons...*), MxPx (*Life in General*), Living Sacrifice (*Reborn*), POD, (*Satellite*) and Precious Death (*Soulfuel*). As the year passed along, we had space issues and bumped this section from several print issues so this here is kind of a "catch-up" list of 10 albums we would have covered in the last 5 issues including this one.

Layout by: Jeff (jeffreyburno.com)

LIVE REPORT

The Chariot's *Tours and Rumors of Tours*

January 27

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY COREY ERB

(WEST PALM BEACH, FL) If there was ever a perfect tour for the HM audience, it was this one. With some unfortunate outside circumstances and being the first show of the tour, this date wasn't the perfect one. Still, four solid bands straight from the pages of HM is better than none.

The Color Morale opened things up at Ground Control, an aptly named small venue right next to the airport. An accident that turned I-95 into a parking lot shortened their set for me, but I caught the last two songs from their debut, *We All Have Demons*. The closer, "Humannequin," highlighted their musical approach, verses of singing alternating with low-end screaming and mid-tempo breakdowns.

Memphis May Fire next brought some of their Southern grit-rock on South Florida. It took prompting for the floor to get moving, but by their second song, "Been There, Done That," the 40 or so onlookers began to get into it. Despite the pleading from the stage, few in the room were familiar enough to sing along during the five-song set. MMF saved their best and most crowd-pleasing for last, however, unleashing "North Atlantic vs. North Carolina" and the older "History of Mercia" to heat up the stage for the veterans to follow.

Due to a van engine blow-up, **Inhale Exhale** wasn't able to make it, but as Josh Scogin of The Chariot later explained, "This is a punk rock show and these things happen." More bad news came in the fact that vocalist **Ryan Zimmerman**'s mother had passed, leaving **Greeley Estates** singerless. **Matt Mullins** of MMF filled in ably, however, and the sputtering dual-guitar machine backing him carried the heavy sound. Mullins smartly let fans sing along, but he more than held his own on short notice the day after Greeley released their latest, *No Rain, No Rainbow*. "Seven Hours" pumped up the crowd, and "Blue Morning" sent kids flying to the front of the stage, catapulting onto others to lend their voices. The room obliged when the opening bars of "Desperate Times Call for Desperate Housewives" urged "Listen up everyone I want you / (On the floor, on the floor)." If you closed your eyes, you almost couldn't tell it wasn't their normal lineup providing the soundtrack for a bank heist scene, screaming "This is a holdup, so listen up while I wave my gun." Bass guitarist **David Ludlow**'s vocals seemed a bit off, though he may have been doing more than usual. Four songs wasn't enough, but it's understandable.

The crowd appeared to double for the headliners, pushing 100 by the time **The Chariot** took the stage. Faces adorned with war paint, backed by an ominous six-foot lighted skull behind the drum kit, the five-piece tore first into "Evolve:." The floor moved noticeably along with "And Shot Each Other," while frontman **Josh Scogin** swung a floodlight, illuminating the bending guitar strings and flying bodies on and offstage. The red-bearded **Jon Kindler** must tape his driver's license to his bass in order to identify his body should one of his limb-flailing, bass-wrenching spasms end tragically. Interludes to re-tune paced out the songs, including a humorous "Seven Nation Army" by Scogin on the bass. The last grasp of sanity in the room quickly vanished amid the dissonant guitar hits of "Phil Cosby," as everyone jumped up and down and pushed up against the stage. Other crowd favorites included "Back to Back," "Yanni Depp" and "Abandon." Following "Daggers," Scogin mentioned their lack of sleep, but added, "We just play C and D chords anyway." "Good Night My Lady…" and "The Deaf Policemen" rounded out the 10-song, 45-minute mix of old and new material. Surprisingly, there was no encore, but by that point I doubt anyone had a voice left to call for one.

Clockwise from top: Josh Scogin & the face of a fan; Alex Torres of Greeley Estates; David Kennedy of The Chariot; Josh pumping the crowd up; Garret Rapp, vocalist of The Color Morale

FAIR

Album: *Disappearing World*
Label: Tooth & Nail
Release Date: February 9, 2010
Members: Aaron Sprinkle, vocals/guitar; Erick Newbill, guitar/vocals; Joey Sanchez, drums/percussion; Nick Barber, bass/vocals

myspace.com/fair

Certainly it's been noted before, but it warrants another mention for those who might be a bit out of the loop: it's unfair (pardon the pun) to call this a side project. Seriously. Of course, how else can one refer to Fair, the sometimes band of super-producer Aaron Sprinkle? After all, he only dangles a new record when other bands like The Almost, Mae, TFK, Copeland and others finally wrap up their own releases.

Yet the time is nigh for the first Fair release in four years, following up 2006's *The Best Worst Case Scenario*. *Disappearing World* is the new disc and it's a worthy successor, holding the strong pop sensibilities Sprinkle's long been known for, as well as a lyrical substance that required such a long time to develop.

"I think the fact that we worked on the record for two years in little chunks – ones that were really intense with great breaks in between – gave the new album this spanning feel," explains Sprinkle. "It's spanning a certain chunk of our lives. It's very personal in that respect for us as a band. But I think it also translates well as far as its ability to connect with people on a musical level and lyrical level."

While much is made of the melodies present on Fair releases, that lyrical aspect became of primary importance when recording this album. As Sprinkle notes, the lyrical process is still subjective, but the group refuses to simply cater to the music alone anymore.

"A key thing about this record was we went into it wanting to give a lot of weight and substance in every bit of the lyrics," explains Sprinkle. "We wanted them to have that connection and not just put words that sound good in a song. We really wanted to say something. My perspective will always be my own. What other people take from it can be completely different and that's what is wonderful about music, I think. Everyone can hear one song and get something different of the same song. But for me, it has more lyrical weight than the last record."

The amount of time between releases also gave Sprinkle the chance to solicit much-needed feedback on the early recordings – some of which forced the mega-producer back to the drawing board to rewrite his own material. Thus the result is truly a collaborative affair – one with the ability to marinate over time.

"It's fun also, because along the way, I bounced portions of the record off of bands I was working with," says Sprinkle. "I would show them rough mixes and things in various stages showing how far along we've gotten. That was another advantage of taking such a long time to make this record. There was that additional perspective on it. There were quite a few songs that I completely rewrote vocal melodies and lyrics to after I thought they were done only because I had the freedom and time to make it right."

More than anything, *Disappearing World* is intended to be a worthy listen, and that's something Sprinkle believes is true of this latest work. "There can be a lot of reasons why a project goes a certain way and with this one, we just wanted to make a record that we were proud of and that we would want to listen to – not that we sit around listening to our music, but you know what I mean."

Sprinkle laughs while explaining the last line, but with a record this good, who'd blame him?

BY MATT CONNER

Album: *Untouchable*
Label: Rise
Release Date: March 9, 2010
Members: Nick Moore, vocals/keys; Landon Tewers, guitar/vocals; Jarrett Hottman, drums/percussion; Anthony Damschroder, bass; Elliott Gruenberg, guitar

myspace.com/beforetheireyes

BEFORE THEIR EYES

What comes first for you guys: lyrics or music? Why do you think that is?
Nick Moore: Music comes first usually. I think it's because Landon (Tewers, guitarist) writes a majority of the music and then shows it to us and then we organize it the way we want at that point. Landon's initial demos are really exciting to us and then we all get to work and do our best to make the song come to life.

If you could change anything about the music industry, what would it be? Why?
I would make the United States a little smaller, so drives wouldn't be so long on tour. I don't really like being in a vehicle for super long drives. Obviously, we don't tour for the sake of having easy drives. We tour to play our music for as many of you as we can!

If you could go back in time and change one thing, what would you choose? Why?
I don't think I would change anything, I believe everything happens for a reason and we probably wouldn't be where we are now if anything changed.

What are some books you've read recently that've blown you away?
Glenn Beck's book, *Arguing with Idiots: How To Stop Small Minds and Big Government*. You just need to read it. He's a genius, I don't care what anyone says.

If someone were to break into your touring van and steal one thing from you, but you could choose what that one thing is, what would it be? (and it can't be "the trash and food wrappers wadded up on my seat..." it's gotta be something you value).
My laptop – I have another one at home I'd just have someone send to me.

Conversely, what one thing would you most NOT want to get stolen? Why?
My iPhone. I'm the only one that has the best music in the world on it, so then I'd be stuck listening to crappy music on long drives.

What is the main theme (if any) on this album? Any recurring ideas?
There is a wide range of themes on this album. Anything from heartbreak to love to war. I think all elements of this album blow away anything we've ever done. We took our time writing and recording this album to make sure it was exactly what we wanted.

How would you define what makes a band "Christian rock?"
I don't know if you really can define Christian rock. When you dig through everything and get to the core of a band, I think that is where you get the definition – where the band members are as people. I've seen bands use the Christian label, play the most Godly music, and be far from what I would consider Christian Rock, because of the way they are in real life. We are all Christians in the band. Not all of our songs are about God – actually on this album there aren't any strong spiritual elements compared to our previous albums, but that doesn't make us any less of a Christian in a rock band, either. To us, it's primarily defined by the way we live and the way we shine.

Would you like to own that tag? Why or why not?
Not really – I don't care what people think about the type of music we are. That's not our concern. If you've ever listened to us, you will know that. We just want to make amazing music that we feel strongly about. We're a rock band who plays various forms of rock music, sometimes pretty heavy, sometimes pretty poppy, as you'll see both extremes on this release. We want anyone who listens to this band to get whatever they want out of it, and that's really important to us. The rest will fall into place.

Photo: Ethan Beazley

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Album: *self-titled*
Label: Rise
Release Date: March 9, 2010
Members: Austin Carlile, vocals; Jaxin Hall, bass/vocals; Tino Arteaga, drums; Phil Manansala, guitar; Shayley Bourget, guitar/vocals

myspace.com/ofmice

OF MICE & MEN

Photo: Vishnu Rajan

What is the most striking memory you have about writing and recording this album?
Austin Carlile: Besides hanging out with raccoons on the porch, having no running water or air conditioning for a while, constant cookouts and games of Nerf football, my best memory would be just watching how the album unfolded. We went in with an idea, nine songs, and no clue how Shayley, our newest addition, would sound with the rest of the band. We left with a distinct sound, 10 songs, and confidence in how everything we worked so hard for had turned out. How we heard the songs in our heads ended up becoming an album.

What do you hope people come away with after hearing it?
I hope they listen to the album once or twice, put it down, go on with their day and find themselves humming the singing melodies, or reciting the sing-alongs in their heads. I hope they can read the lyrics and say, "Hey, I've been through that before." Or "Wow, I can really relate to this." I personally just hope they feel something from it, however the lyrics strike them individually, because hey, what is music without emotion?

I understand you're a believer... What challenges does having faith in Christ bring to a career in rock and roll?
I very much am so. The term "Christian" has been so overused and being in a "Christian band" has sickeningly become marketable. OM&M is not a Christian band in the least bit. We actually only have one song on the album that talks about it, and if you are a believer you will hear it and go, "Oh wow, he is talking about his walk with Jesus!" Others may just take it as another song with lyrics about unconditional love or wanting to help someone. I don't want to stand on a soap box with my faith. Having a relationship with Jesus Christ isn't a contest. It isn't a "who can be a better Christian and accomplish more things." And it sure as crap shouldn't be used just to have a banner on your MySpace that says "Jesus Saves" to make you look like a "good person." I want fans, friends and anyone to see by my actions, and my love I have inside of me showing through, just how amazing having a relationship with Jesus Christ can be, and I don't think you need to be in a "Christian band" to do so.

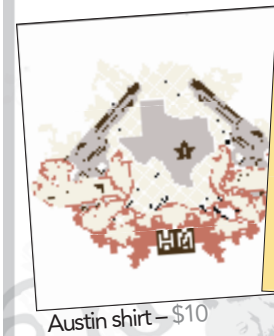
What are your hopes for the band?
Honestly? Ha, to have fun doing this, always. Making music like ours isn't going to support me for the next 60 years, or us having one hit single buy me and my family 4 new cars and houses. If I were in this for the money I'd kidnap Eric Rushing or Dave Shapiro and take their jobs, or take over the entire Artery Foundation, haha! I just want to be able to do this for as long as possible and make a living off of it while I can. It's too fun. I've been on the road from July till January, it's been four weeks of a break and I already miss being up on that stage. So, my hopes? Just that this will last, and I can continue to make a difference in kids' lives by doing it.

What are your favorite songs to play live?
Literally all of them. I don't want to talk between songs, I wish guitars didn't need tuned (laughs), I want the set to just keep going and going. It's amazing to me, nothing compares. Although I *am* awfully sick of playing our "Poker Face" cover. But even a song like that is fun for me. I just love playing music.

What's the short version of how you got hooked up with this label and with the producer you used on this album?
Craig from Rise has always been supportive of me. When I left Attack Attack! he told me to get back in the game and that he would help me however he could. He even suggested bands for me to join that needed singers, but it just came down to me wanting to do something completely my own. I made a MySpace, put up one song, and texted him saying to check it out. He responded back "So, when are you signing with Rise?!" and the rest is history. Craig is the man, everyone at Rise is. I wouldn't be where I am if it weren't for the faith he and his "memorable" team has had in me all along.

BY DOUG VAN PELT

HARD WEAR BUNDLE SALE



Austin shirt – $10

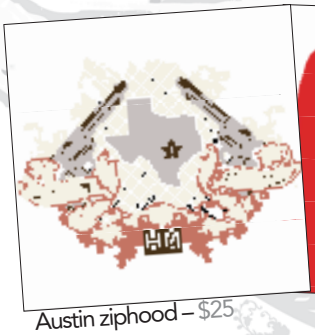
Backpage shirt – $10

Both shirts for $14

Girly shirt – $10

Backpage shirt – $10

Both shirts for $14

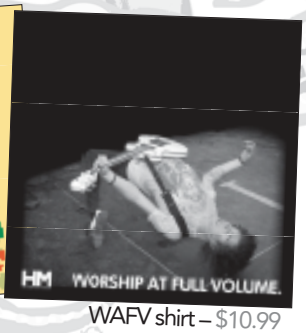


Austin ziphood – $25

Logo ziphood – $30

Both ziphoods for $35

Backpage shirt – $10



WAFV shirt – $10.99

Both shirts for $17

HM
THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

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Paper Route - Seabird - John Mark McMillan - Deas Vail
Children 18:3 - I Am Terrified - Ivoryline - B. Reith
In the Midst of Lions - Onward Olympas - Esterlyn
Oceans in Love - Derek Webb - Becoming Daniel
Thi'sl - Texas In July - Ace Augustine

SPEAKERS: Renee Yohe (inspiration behind TWLOHA)
Lecrae - Andrew Schwab
Bradley Hathaway (poetry seminar)
Brian Kemper - and many more to come!

••• Artist subject to change without notice

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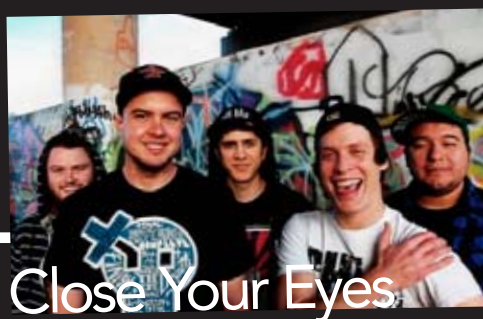
Queens Club

Typically the "band member who leaves to form his own new band" story finds the apple falling closely to its original tree. Yet for Jake Ryan and Dan Eaton – former members of The Chariot – they've completely abandoned their metal leanings for the Euro dance-rock sounds of acts like The Bravery and Bloc Party. Their new band, Queens Club, stayed within the Tooth & Nail family and recently released an opening EP titled *Nightmarer* as a proper carpet runner for their full-length record. It seems a surprising change, until you consider that Ryan and Eaton are just fans of music in general.

"I wanna say, like, maybe 2006, but it could have been 2007," explains Ryan on the band's beginning. "It's kinda hard for me to remember the year, but I do know that the idea was initially spawned from the first tour we did as The Chariot over in Europe. One of the venues in Germany turned into a dance club after the show, and everyone from the tour was in there dancing and having fun. It just kinda was one of those moments where you're like, 'Man this would be fun to try and do.' The thing about Dan and I is that we've always played music together no matter what kind. No matter what band we're in, we both really just love to play for the sake of fun and because it's something we just really love to do. At some point, we had some time off from touring with The Chariot and Dan and I were always hanging out playing music anyways," Ryan continues. "So we just brought in a couple of buddies with us to riff some things out. I guess it was a little more focused, for sure. I think the idea was always to kinda play a few shows and just see where it went. Once Dan and I left The Chariot we decided to try and make Queens Club something real and do it full time."

The framework of Queens Club might have been present during their days in The Chariot, but Ryan insists that he and Eaton didn't leave to specifically make their own music. Instead, Ryan explains the new group is his obedient response to the call he felt from God. "This may sound crazy depending on what you believe, but the honest reason for me leaving was solely based on what I felt like the Lord was doing in my heart regarding The Chariot. It was that and that alone that led me to depart from the band. The message I felt from the Lord was that seasons change in our lives just like they do in weather, and that He was just calling me to follow Him as he helped lay a new path for me."

Even with the new sound, Ryan notes it's still hard to pin down any new influences since he always listened to such a large array of music in the first place. So even though listeners pick up tinges of Editors or Franz Ferdinand, Ryan jokes that their only commonality lies in heavy metal. "I think guys that play music for the most part tend to listen to a lot of types of music. You would probably crack up if you saw all the stuff on my iPod. There's so much great music out there that I just want to take in. Sure, I think it's safe to say that you can draw some inspiration from other artists, but I can't think of just one artist or band that could be the cornerstone that we all draw from collectively. Except for maybe Metallica."



Close Your Eyes

100% Spirit-filled hardcore? Now that's what I call Close Your Eyes. From being a thought created on Hardin-Simmons University campus between vocalist Shane Raymond and guitarist Brett Callaway, to touching the hearts of hardcore kids and many more, Close Your Eyes is set in gear to release their first full album, *We Will Overcome,* on Victory Records. In the beginning Close Your Eyes was in the midst of finding their sound. Brett grew up with punk mostly. "At first Shane didn't want the band to sound punkish at all," Brett says. "We turned into a screamo band, which I did not like, but I just enjoy playing it, so it was cool."

Close Your Eyes gives the hardcore scene an honest Godly message of showing the love of Christ to others. It could be lending a helping hand or keeping people in prayer. In their song "Digging Graves" it talks about people that are less fortunate than others and many just walk by, ignoring the fact they exist as people. As a band they realize that America as a nation struggles with problems and only God can save us. This idea comes from the band being truly passionate about what they believe in.

Close Your Eyes does an excellent job of showing their faith without forcing it upon people. This is done with the act of doing what the Bible commands us as Christians, which is to love thy neighbor as yourself. Through their music (their) fingers are never pointed at sins, because they want listeners to know that people can receive God through simple acts of love.

The meaning behind Close Your Eyes came from Brett reading the book of Revelation about spiritual warfare. With the world being controlled by darkness, we can close our eyes and see the truth being that God is in control.

From reading their lyrics anyone can notice that Close Your Eyes are a Christian band and when performing live they give it their all. While showing the love of God on stage they want to make sure everyone has a good time.

"On stage we perform as a hardcore band," Brett says. "We play so hard to the point where we are exhausted after the show."

The album hit on February 15th, followed by a tour with Signs of Hope and in March with Take It Back! With the dedication and hard work put into this album, along with guest vocals from Mattie Montgomery of For Today, *We Will Overcome* promises to bring the ruckus.

Thin Ice

"In hardcore music and other heavy styles, the lyrics are often driven by hate, antipathy and anger towards a world who 'Doesn't understand me,' or 'Turned its back on me,' or towards a friend who 'Stabbed me in the back.' We hope to transcend the cliché by writing more substantial lyrics and by bringing a more positive message. As it stands, hardcore reaches only a chosen few, but we believe the message of the Cross is powerful enough to break barriers and reach many."

This is the vision of the Texas-based hardcore band Thin Ice. They recently signed to Blood & Ink Records by the label taking a look at their MySpace page. Blood & Ink were so blown away by their heavy sound that they immediately contacted the band.

Thin Ice started out from a previous band called Goldmill, which happened to be Blood & Ink's first choice. Jake and Chris, the guitar players for Thin Ice, started writing hardcore riffs and then recruited Bruce and Drew from Goldmill. Jake's brother Phil completed the line up by becoming the vocalist. The boys wanted Thin Ice to be a destructive band with a heavy and groundbreaking feel to it. Through hardcore they felt like this would complete their goal.

"We all have a history of being in various heavy bands whether metal or hardcore. We wanted to be extremely heavy and ruthless with this project musically speaking and hardcore is a great outlet for that since it's energetic and abrasive. We draw different influences, so we can please metalheads and hardcore kids alike. There's something for everyone who appreciates heavy music. For those who don't ... well … sorry."

The band believes their mission is to speak the truth of Christ and his saving power. This is taken seriously in playing the kind of music that portrays hateful lyrics and negative mindsets. When deciding on a band name, Thin Ice sounded nice to the members' ears, but then they went with the definition of it standing for the times when you're extremely close to "going under" and they believe there is One who saves from such situations.

For their strong beliefs in the Holy Spirit, Thin Ice goes by this scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:25.

"And every man who takes part in the sports has self-control in all things. Now they do it to get a crown which is of this world, but we for an eternal crown."

Hope at Hand

After being touched by a Pro-Life rally in Washington D.C., a few people went back to their hometown of Fredericksburg, Virginia, to start their musical journey. A few months after the rally vocalist Randy Martinez joined the band in their vision of how God feels about His creation. "We are living in the days of the greatest holocaust the earth has ever seen; 55 million abortions in America since '73 and almost a billion worldwide," says Martinez. "We began playing shows and quickly realized that God had even bigger plans than just the ending of abortion, He wanted to sweep a whole generation up into His heart.

"It wasn't enough just to change legislation, a whole generation who made it out of the womb are still carrying that orphan spirit of feeling alone and unwanted. Therefore our prayer has become for God to end abortion and send revival to America. I really believe we are on the cusp of a third Great Awakening that is going to sweep across the nation and the Father is calling out to sons and daughters to find a home in His house and in His courts. I believe God is zealous about delivering even us who grew up in youth group our whole life from that prodigal spirit that tells us we have to leave our Father's house to have a good time. We are seeing the reality of this at our shows. There is Hope At Hand for this generation."

The band released their EP, *Come Let Us Reason,* back in early 2009. While creating sounds of heavy melodic hardcore that can relate to August Burns Red and The Devil Wears Prada, Martinez starts with the concept that God drops in his heart weeks or months before ever hearing it.

"Songs like 'Wayward Sons' came straight from passages in the Bible like Proverbs 7, where the personification of wisdom is crying out for her sons to beware of the adulteress. Other songs like 'Decades of Night,' which is our prayer for the ending of abortion, are more written to tell a story and shed light on the fact that the very power and forces that fuel the murder of our children are the very things that we are inviting into our homes when we turn on the TV or when we sacrifice time being fathers to our kids for the sake of our careers and let Hollywood raise them. Most of our songs take on the form of prayers, but they are meant to be proclamations as well."

[see more of each band's interview at hmmag.com]

FOR TODAY FRONTMAN MATTIE MONTGOMERY HAS TAKEN HIS FIERY PASSION AND EMPHATIC VOCAL DELIVERY INTO THE STUDIO FOR A UNIQUE SPOKEN WORD ALBUM HE'S SELF-RELEASING [*REVOLUTION*]. IMAGINE TUNING INTO YOUR FAVORITE PASTORAL VOICE FOR A DAILY WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND BLESSING...

What led you to want to do this special album?
I've felt, for a long time, that our generation is, in large part, a generation without spiritual leadership. And the spiritual leadership we do have often comes from a place of religion, instead of true revelation and intimacy with God. I believe there are a few people in our fathers' generation that have labored to see us free from the bondage of tradition-based religion, and because of that, we are a people who are fed up with simply attending church and pretending like everything is okay. We are a generation who are hungry for the real, living God, so I believe that it will be a prophetic voice from within our generation that is going to call us into God's destiny for us. So, as an underground music scene that operates outside the four walls of the church, I believe that God is calling this voice out from our group, to declare the name of the true, living God and His son, Jesus Christ, to a generation. I made this album to offer this call to our generation – that, we can build upon the progress of our fathers, and step into the fullness of God in our time.

What are you specifically addressing on this thing?
A lot of different things. Everything from pornography to fasting, prophecy to depression. There are a number of key subjects that I believe stand against the spiritual advancement of our generation that I come against on the album, and there are also a number of key subjects that I believe will help equip us to overcome those things that I also address on the album.

What fruit do you hope to bear with this release?
I hope that God will use this to challenge a group of young men and women to step up and become the leader that God has called them to be. People talk to me as if I am somehow a better Christian than them, or they'll say things like "Man, it's just so inspirational the way you love Jesus." Those people are profoundly deceived. Love is an action word. It's not the way I feel about Jesus that makes what we do so powerful, it's the fact that I choose to act out my love for Jesus, instead of just talking about it. When you really love someone, you can't shut up about them – you want everyone to know how you feel, and how great this person is, and why you love them. Anyone that claims "I love Jesus," but can't seem to find the courage to stop people in their schools and in the streets to talk about how great He is... Well, I have to question the reality of their "love" for Jesus. But, I pray that this release challenges people in this area, and brings them to a place where Jesus really is all they need, and they are willing to risk man's approval to gain God's.

In an ideal situation, what do you hope happens next (as a follow-up or reaction to this project)?
Honestly, I'm hoping for more opportunities to just speak the truth of God. I love playing with the band, but I'm excited for the day that young people are so desperate for the voice of God that hundreds and thousands of people will come together to simply seek His face – no gimmicks, no music distracting from the point, just people declaring the glory and majesty of the King, and a generation responding to it. This is why I will be doing speaking tours whenever For Today is on break. To have an opportunity to take things deeper, in a more intimate setting than that of a hardcore show, and to step into the divine and experience God on a whole new level with some of the people that have been following our ministry with For Today.

I heard a rumor that I dismissed that said some members of For Today were leaving to pastor a church. Any truth to that? What's going on there?
That's not true at all. I've actually heard that from people all around the country. It's flattering to think that people would be interested if we *were* planning to start a church. But, as it stands right now, we are called to serve the Lord by playing in this band, and that is where our focus is. However, if that changes, you'll be one of the first to know! :)

What are some encouraging stories of how you've seen God moving lately?
We've seen that, in bars and clubs – in very dark places – people are still coming to see Jesus, for real. I think one of the most courageous things a person can do is to acknowledge that they need a savior. And, we've had people with broken wrists or with cancer coming for prayer and being touched with the power and love of God. We've had people come to our shows, claiming to be an atheist, and leave having experienced the REAL God – not the God they read about in some book, or heard some old man talk about on TV. We truly are a generation who are fed up with religion. And, I believe that God is honoring that in a real, practical way by making Himself manifest in the hard hearts of an abandoned generation. It's amazing to see, and it's an honor to be a part of!

This album is eight separate tracks, each one between three and five minutes long. Each of the tracks is written around a different theme or message. For example, there is a song called "Restless," that is written about what it means to truly be "Restless" for the sake of Christ. Or a song called "Vision" that is written based on the verse in Proverbs that says "Where there is no vision, the people perish." They all have background music that was written and recorded by Josh Schroeder (the owner/engineer for Random Awesome Recording Studio in Bay City, Michigan, and the drummer for my old band, Besieged). He's been a good friend of mine for years, and when I shared with him my vision for this project, he jumped on board, and was a *huge* help in bringing this whole thing together. The music for the album is really great, and does a lot to help create an atmosphere, and make the album a little more dynamic than just me speaking for 35 minutes.

After the music was finished, everything else was recorded and produced by Ted Skolits with Integrity Music (Hillsong United, Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, etc.). Ted is the mastermind behind the final audio quality of the project. He was in charge of everything from background sound effects, to vocal phrasing, along with some lyrical and musical editing. He and I met about four months ago, and he was more than willing to be a part of any project that I was doing for the sake of the Kingdom, which was an incredible help. I think this project is much better off for having Ted be a part of it.

✖

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Readers' Poll of 2009

YOUR VOICE, YOUR CHOICE

Congratulations to August Burns Red, who swept four categories this past year. Everyone loved their Constellations album – from the songs to the artwork. It'll be exciting to see what they come up with next. Thanks again for voting and, while you're thinking about it, reach out and congratulate the bands. Let them know you love them. It's encouraging.

Favorite Unsigned Band
WHITE COLLAR SIDESHOW

2> Ilia
3> Dagon
4> Pastor Brad
5> Vanguard

YOU DON'T TUG ON SUPERMAN'S CAPE
YOU DON'T SPIT INTO THE WIND.
YOU DON'T PULL THE MASK OFF THE OLD LONE RANGER...
AND YOU DON'T MESS AROUND WITH
LIVING SACRIFICE

Favorite Article
LIVING SACRIFICE

2> White Collar Sideshow
3> Flyleaf
4> For Today
5> Project 86

Favorite Band
AUGUST BURNS RED

2> *Flyleaf*
3> *Oh, Sleeper*
4> *Stryper*
5> *Showbread*

Favorite Album
CONSTELLATIONS (ABR)

2> *Dichotomy* (Becoming the Archetype)
3> *With Roots Above...* (The Devil Wears Prada)
4> *Murder By Pride* (Stryper)
5> *(tie) The Fear of God* (Showbread)
& *Son of the Morning* (Oh, Sleeper)

Favorite Album Cover
CONSTELLATIONS (ABR)

2> *With Roots Above and Branches Below* (TDWP)
3> *The Serpent Servant* (Impending Doom)
4> *Dichotomy* (Becoming the Archetype)
5> *...In Shallow Seas We Sail* (Emery)

Favorite Song
"MARIANAS TOUCH" (ABR)

2> "The Finisher" (Oh, Sleeper)
3> "Again" (Flyleaf)
4> "Here I Am" (Thresher)
5> "Murder by Pride" (Stryper)

Favorite Singer

BRUCE FITZHUGH (Living Sacrifice)

2> Dallas Taylor (Maylene & the Sons of Disaster)
3> Michael Sweet (Stryper)
4> John Cooper (Skillet)
5> Lacey Mosely (Flyleaf)

Photo: Keaton Andrew

Favorite Guitarist

ROCKY GRAY (Living Sacrifice)

2> JB Brubaker (August Burns Red)
3> Jeremy DePoyster (The Devil Wears Prada)
4> Shane Blay (Oh, Sleeper)
5> Brad Noah (Disciple)

Favor

DEVIN S

2> Dustin D
3> Tim Gain
4> John Coop
5> Josh Gilbe

ite Bassist

SHELTON (Emery)
avidson (August Burns Red)
es (Stryper)
er (Skillet)
rt (As I Lay Dying)

Favorite Keyboardist

SETH HECOX (Becoming the Archetype)
2> Adam Young (Owl City)
3> Nadaddy (Family Force 5)
4> Chris Dudley (Underoath)
5> Brent Jeffers (Stryper)

Favorite Drummer

AARON GILLESPIE (Underoath)

2> Yogi Watts (Demon Hunter)
3> Lance Garvin (Living Sacrifice)
4> Matt Greiner (August Burns Red)
5> Robert Sweet (Stryper)

Favorite Lyricist

TIM LAMBESIS (As I Lay Dying)

2> Andrew Schwab (Project 86)
3> Micah Kinard (Oh, Sleeper)
4> Mattie Montgomery (For Today)
5> Michael Sweet (Stryper)

Photo: Jim Layton

Favorite New Band

OWL CITY

2> *Grave Robber*
3> *We Came As Romans*
4> *Corpus Christi*
5> (*tie*) *The Letter Black* & *The Sacrificed*

Photo: Corey Erb

Favorite Live Band

THE CRUCIFIED

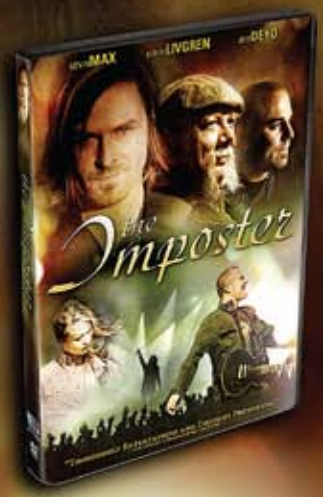
2> *Becoming The Archetype*
3> *Stryper*
4> *August Burns Red*
5> *The Chariot*

Photo: Cindy Villasenor

KEVIN **MAX** KERRY **LIVGREN** JEFF **DEYO**

"Thoroughly Entertaining And Thought Provoking."
—Chris Goodwin, Program Director, KVRK

the Imposter



Christian rock's hottest band, Grand Design is heading to the top! Unfortunately, lead singer Johnny C (Kevin Max of dcTalk) is heading straight down. Losing his family and fame turns him inside out. His mentor, Proff (Kerry Livgren of Kansas) shows him how to begin to take the masks off, but will it be enough to turn his life around?

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OWL CITY

Photo: Pamela Littky

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FLATFO

THE AIR UNDERNEATH THE TENT AT CORNERSTONE FESTIVAL'S UNDERGROUND STAGE LAST YEAR WAS ALMOST ELECTRIC WITH ANTICIPATION. FLATFOOT 56 HAD SOMETHING BIG PLANNED AND MANY FOLKS IN THE CROWD COULD SENSE IT.

Previous shows at this festival and other locations had been memorable. It's not easy to forget the giant racetrack of a circle pit from Cstone '08, where a couple people in the circular stampede from the stage all the way back to the soundboard were carrying giant flags. It was fast-moving and large. This time they wanted to make it bigger and crazier.

What started with a fiesta theme stretched into a large-scale re-creation of the battle of the Alamo. The band recruited close to 20 of their craziest friends and carefully explained their roles as agitators that would defend a piece of hallowed ground in the center of the giant circus tent. They used several blow-up mattresses as fortress walls and their own homemade armament (like cardboard shields with plastic milk carton handles and rotten bananas and water balloons attached) to fend off the rest of the crowd.

The volunteer agitators were introduced by frontman Tobin Bawinkel, and they entered the cleared-out circle and immediately started taunting the crowd, prepping them for the upcoming assault. The larger guys held

BY DOUG VAN PELT

the mattresses and the smaller ones used those foam "noodles" as swords to fend off the attack.

Bawinkel yelled "Go!" as the band launched into "Stampede" (from the new album, *Black Thorn*). The makeshift Alamo didn't stand a chance against the massive crowd and it collapsed in a few seconds. Not only did the mattresses and those mighty warriors surrender to the force of bodies, but the two large tent poles in the middle did as well. Stagehands rushed the stage and quickly stopped the show. The crowd had literally "brought the house down." Fortunately, no one got hurt.

You can watch a handheld video of this fiasco on YouTube (by searching "Flatfoot 56 the Alamo"). It was the craziest thing in a long time.

The band wanted to create an experience that no one would forget. They achieved that goal, taking legendary status in the minds of many there. "You go to a show and experience something huge," declares Tobin, "it doesn't leave you. You always remember that."

[L-R: Justin Bawinkel, Brandon Good, Eric McMahon, Kyle Bawinkel, Tobin Bawinkel. Photo: Chad Sengestock ishotphotography.com]

The raucous music of Flatfoot 56 has an energy to it that takes you to a different place from whatever setting they're performing in. The music's attitude, feel and spirit, if you will, is loud and passionate. While thoroughly drenched in centuries-old Irish folk music, it's also very much punk rock. In other words, there's as many scuffed black Doc Martens in the audience as there is leprechaun green. There's as much spittum spilled upon the floor as beer.

"People maybe don't realize how fun our musical style is," questions drummer and brother Justin Bawinkel. "People come to our shows and go, 'Whoa! This is, like, really happy, jovial music.' That's what we really appreciate about the style. It's like the ska style. There's a lot of happiness in the music. It's really joy-filled.

"As far as the punk-rock music scene and hardcore and ska," he continues, "they're all like sister and brother scenes. The kids are awesome. They're really friendly for the most part. You have your snots, you know, like you do in every scene. But, for the most part, if you come into their scene with the design to be friends with them, they're all about it, because there aren't too many of them (the scene just isn't that big). It's not the popular thing to do most of the time. Kids are super great. I think one of the downfalls is they're really rebellious," he slightly laughs. "They're not too fond of authority figures and Christianity and lots of other things in this world and this life that are a big part of our band. They really buck against it a little bit. But they're great kids. When you go into a show, you can't be afraid. You can't be like, 'Ah, man, they're hitting each other. It looks like they're fighting.' They're really not. They're just so intensely desiring relationship with each other that they beat the snot out of each other in the pit. Some people get a little weirded out by it, but they're really awesome people."

Black Thorn, (the band's third nationally released album) is going to be released on St. Patrick's Day. This is no coincidence. There's definitely an affinity with Ireland and this band. "We've always considered ourselves to be a punk band with Celtic flavoring," explains Tobin. "Some bands would consider themselves a Celtic band with a punk flavor. We're from the South side of Chicago, which has a huge Irish community. Chicago in general is Irish. It's kind of a big place when it comes to the Irish community. It's got one of the biggest St. Patty's Day parades in the world. We're big history guys. We're into cultural history. Irish history is kind of a documentation of an entire people's folklore and history. Just being able to put your head down and fight your struggles.

"We kind of grew up, the three brothers, listening to our parents' music. They're really into bluegrass. The history of bluegrass comes from Irish music – kind of an offshoot. We have inclinations of that in our upbringing in general. Being the rowdy kind of guys that we are, loving punk and ska and stuff, we were just kind of drawn to this stuff and being a little different and strange – from having a bagpiper to dancing. If production works, we like to have a mandolin player. St. Patrick's Day is always kind of an exciting time of year for us, because we want to hear something rowdy or go out and dance to Irish jigs. It's been a fun time every year. So, what better time to put this record out?"

While you'd expect any Irish-influenced band to at least pay some homage to the spiritual roots of the tiny island off the coast of England, Flatfoot 56 wears those roots on its sleeve with an evangelistic fervor and a punk-rock not-backing-down steadfastness that commands respect and forges an instant likeable bond with its audience – no matter the location. While they play a lot of gigs in pubs and their music is accessible to the mainstream, their internal focus is so strong that they might better be known as a "Christian band" rather than the cliche catch phrase "Christians in a band."

While not coming across as guys who obsess over themselves, they're not unaware that they're about to hit their 10th year as a unit ... and it means something to them – something really good. "I grew up listening to punk and ska," relates Tobin, "and I always remember seeing those bands that made it to their 10-year anniversary. It was always kind of my vision that (we'd be) a Christian band just to play music out of love and as long as He told us to play, that we would do it. If He told us to stop, we would stop. So, that being the case, we were really, really blessed to be able to play for this long.

"For some reason, the 10-year anniversary feels different. Everybody starts to realize, 'Hey, these guys have been around. They're not young anymore…They've been around for a long time and there's something to the fact. I've always been one of those guys that didn't want to be a band that was a flash in the pan, but just really did it because we love playing and we love kids and we love the Lord. I've been looking forward to our 10th anniversary. I want to be a band that people take serious, 'That stick in there with us.' That's pretty much where I'm at. I like those old-school bands."

Justin is quick to agree. While talking about the joy of being used to make an impact on someone else's life, he was pressed to identify some specific songs that did that for him. He listed "Stairway to Sin" and "Building a Better Me" by Dogwood, the entire *Rituals Of Life* album by Stretch Arm Strong and an indie band out of San Antonio called Our Corpse Destroyed. Nothing communicates a "band of the people" better than information like this, where it's obvious that the members of Flatfoot 56 are just kids that love music in the bodies of men (even if a kilt is worn every now and then).

When Christian rock's historical growth ventured into the harder edges of rock and metal back in the '80s, one of the challenges often cited by those in and outside of the scene was the specific temptations that came with the scene. For glam metal bands it might've been female legs in stockings, among other vices. For a Celtic punk band, one cultural imprint of the scene is sure to smack these lads in the face – alcohol consumption. For FF56, it's just another simple, but laid-back distinction.

"I really feel like a lot of bands really do a disservice to the Irish people by making all of their music about alcohol," states Tobin. "I think there's a lot more that could be talked about. For some reason, when you think of Irish people, all you imagine is a little leprechaun with a beer in his hand. To me it's a cheap stereotype to put on a culture that's done insane things for the world. Most of us have a strict general rule. None of us really drink on the road, just to keep our witness going forward. Most of us don't drink at all, which is kind of really funny for a Celtic punk band. Everybody has their own opinions on that kind of thing.

"In light of that thing, playing in Irish pubs and stuff and having a lot of drinkers at your shows, you get offered a lot of stuff. We've learned little responses that let people (know) that we're very thankful for their offer. People will bring shots up to your stage and go, 'Here you go!' To them it's a sign of, 'Hey, I want to be friends. I want to encourage you guys.' We've learned responses that don't shoot them down for being nice, but also don't force what we decided as a band to be known for and be around.

"A lot of our friends around Chicago at our home church and stuff are AA guys and a lot of them have really bad histories with alcoholism. Personally as a band, it's more important to us to make sure they don't stumble and for that reason we kind of abstain to watch out for our buddies. We have guys that come out to our shows and they love the band, they love seeing the music. They're old punk rock guys, but as soon as they smell alcohol, the hair on their arms stands up and they crave horribly. For them it's a real stumbling point. I don't know if I believe alcohol is an evil thing, but I know it's something that can ruin their life and I don't want to have any part of encouraging that ruining their life. We make our music about something else and we write about other things. Flatfoot tries to make music that's more relevant than just about a drink.

"In comparison to that, too, we're not a serious band that goes out and carves x's in people that do. We definitely realize that there are people that do handle it well and they can handle it. We're looked at very strangely by a lot of people. I just did an interview a little while ago with a pretty well-known magazine and they were like, 'So, do you guys party? Are you guys partiers? Are you guys drinkers?' When I told him no, he kind of looked at me sideways. 'That doesn't relate to your music at all. How in the world does that relate?' And I'm like, 'Well, to be honest with you, music is music.

so intensely desiring each other that they beat of each other in the pit."

We're not singing about drinking. It's not something that our band is about, so why do we have to do it? We're Christians in a punk-rock band. How weird is that in the first place?' Obviously, we're not going to have a hard time being a little bit more strange and not drinking. There are guys in the band that have had a few beers in the past and stuff, but it's never something that they… when we're on the road it just doesn't happen.

"I'm one of the elders in my church and that's another reason why I don't. I'm actually awfully allergic to it, which is really funny. In the past I had a shot of sake in Japan in front of Flogging Molly and I turned bright red. This was years ago. They all looked at me and started laughing. It's really funny to sit there with pretty much a whole band of professional drinkers and just being a total panty waist when it comes to something so small. At that time I hadn't really laid out what I really stood for and that was kind of the only thing in the last few years. That's pretty much where we stand. It's kind of a hairy question, even among Christians. Some Christians are definitely (teetotalers) and some are like, 'Hey, we're having a deacon's meeting this weekend. Make sure you bring a six-pack with you.' It's not something that should be that important, so I guess we don't need it. But at the same time, we're not at all judgmental about people that do. There's a lot of our good friends that totally partake and we don't think anything of it. We just know where we stand and what we want to portray."

Flatfoot 56: not a wishy-washy band.

HIGHLIGHTS

Formed in their basement at the turn of the millennium, they played their first show at a hall where they competed with a Mariachi-playing jukebox. Their next big show was on the FatCalf generator stage at Cornerstone Festival 2003. Later on Tobin saw a kid wearing a Flatfoot 56 t-shirt down by the mainstage and it practically changed his life. In 2006 they signed to Flicker Records and released *Knuckles Up*, followed by *Jungle of the Midwest Sea* in '07. This year was highlighted by an out-of-nowhere invitation from Flogging Molly to join them on a small tour of Japan. This latest album, *Black Thorn*, was recorded with Johnny Rioux of Street Dogs, whom the band has toured with and befriended many times over. "He's got a rap sheet or history as long as your arm of bands that he's been in or worked with – everything from the Dropkick Murphys to Mike Ness of Social Distortion," gushes Tobin. "He asked us if we would have him to produce our new record." Both Tobin and Justin agreed that working with him was a good experience. "If any band had the opportunity to have Johnny Rioux direct your record," he quips, "I would kick their butt. 'Get in your car, drive over there and do it now.'"

PERSONALITIES

Original bagpipe and mandolin player, Josh Robieson, recently stepped down (replaced by two – count 'em – guys), citing time away from his new marriage as a strain he felt led to leave. This is partially fortunate now, because he's not around to get the character descriptions the guys were happy to pour on each other for this story:

Justin Bawinkel (Drums, Vocals): "He's a huge comic book nerd and a Star Wars, sci-fi geek. The other guy in the band that's married. Sometimes sticks his foot in his mouth at shows by saying something that sounds bad but isn't, but he's also the backbone of the band."

Tobin Bawinkel (Vocals, Guitars): "He's a talker. He really has a gift to explain things that are intelligent and tactful and just really kind of cut people to the core. A huge asset to the band. He's got a lot of grace for people and will listen to ya."

Kyle Bawinkel (Bass, Vocals): "The great balancing character in our band. He's not easily sold on anything. He doesn't trust easily, but he loves hard. He's the guy that grabs the really down-and-outers, befriends them and makes them cool. He does DJ nights in Chicago, spinning old vinyl."

Eric McMahon (Bagpipes, Guitars): "Awesome, sweetheart guy. Quiet, but if he sees something he doesn't like, steps up. Has a real heart for people and the Lord. A real encouragement for us. He's recently started to step up in that area. He's been with us for the last 10 years, but only playing with us for the last month and a half."

Brandon Good (Mandolin, Guitars): "The worship leader at my church. Has been in hardcore bands most of his life. We tell him he looks like Yukon Cornelius from the old *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* cartoons. His nickname is 'Muffins,' because he likes muffins."

With *Black Thorn* Flatfoot 56 have honed their recognizable sound and, with the production help of Johnny Rioux, they sound like the same band that made the raw and simple *Knuckles Up* and *Jungle of the Midwest Sea* – only better – with several years of non-stop touring behind it. Sonically, it's crisp, thick and full. Songwise, each of the 13 tracks invite movement and singing along at every chorus. Lyrically, they've succeeded in telling stories that engage the heart and the brain. With "You Won Me Over," they could potentially find a semi-permanent home on the radio, Green Day style. In short, they've "really done it" with this album.

GRATITUDE

The song "Courage" is a great example of an artist expressing their heart and honoring someone that's gone before them. When asked to share an example of someone's life impacting theirs, Justin was quick to point out the example of the Bawinkels' dad. "I think our dad is a big one for us. He's just done some awesome stuff in our life. He's always been there for us and encouraged us in everything we do."

"For the majority of the band, my dad's been our manager. He's a minister in Chicago. He's amazing. Obviously, this band would not exist if it wasn't for my parents," Tobin adds with a slight laugh that turns into a sigh, as if to underscore their dual importance. "They're just really good people and huge encouragers and have a really big heart for music in general. We actually got our start from them playing in our living room. My dad plays quite a string banjo and guitar. He's been a huge inspiration on those guys."

"I've seen people step up and honor him in ways that are…" pauses Justin. "...it's really awesome and caused me to, you know, look at my dad a little more than just my dad. More than just, 'Oh, what he does is expected' or 'That's what he does normally…' No, my dad is actually an awesome man that gives of himself completely all the time, who has done amazing things with his life and impacted the lives of others. I don't do it as much as I should. Just talking about him now, I definitely need to honor him more. As far as people in my life, that'd be the biggest one."

Prior to this interview, the band had just returned at eight in the morning from Michigan, where they played some shows booked by one church. "We found out that the church that was throwing the shows ... the pastor's daughter committed suicide that week," Tobin pauses – not for effect, but to collect himself. "They all decided that they were going to go forward. The last show of the week we were supposed to do the night of the funeral and they still decided to do it. They really felt like it was something they wanted to go forward with. It was a very intense weekend, let me tell ya! It was awesome and God really worked in some cool ways, but it's an intense thing. I've never had to do that. The last show kind of turned into a memorial service for this girl. She had actually come and seen us play the last time we were up there, so it was really an intense week. God is really stirring and doing a lot of cool things, I think. There's a lot of healing still going on."

And, not surprisingly, this band of fun-loving hooligans are right in the middle of it, spilling joy where it's needed and just being there to be used. Whether that calls for being the center of attention or just getting out of the way. It's just pretty much impossible not to love this band. Ain't it?

✖

Photo: Chad Sensenbach [ishotphotography.com]

THE CLOCK IS TIC
THERE IS STILL W

AS EACH DAY PASSES BY, WE SEE THIS WORLD ROTTING MORE AND MORE. SICKNESS AND POVERTY ARE SPREADING AT AN INCREASING RATE AND PEOPLE ARE DYING. MANY ARE LOSING HOPE AND FAITH TO THE FIGURE THAT ONCE WALKED THIS EARTH CASTING OUT DEMONS AND HEALING THE SICK. NOW IS NOT THE TIME OF LETTING GO. NOW IS THE TIME OF REFORMATION.

In these dark times, Demon Hunter stands out with a bright light held high. The band has been known for their addicting heavy sound with melodic choruses and in-your-face, honest-to-goodness lyrics. Their music has touched a wide number of people as evidenced by their symbol being seen as a sign of unity. Many fans have this symbol as a part of their personal lives through tattoos and the visual arts. As a band they have always been mysterious in what to expect. Before anyone knew who the band was, Solid State in 2002 only advertised the band by showing the goat head symbol with their first album release date below it. This simple act left consumers itching to know what was about to come. Since then the band has become a way of life rather than just another selection on someone's mp3 playlist.

Demon Hunter will be releasing their fifth studio album, named *The World Is A Thorn*. It will be available March 9th in stores and for digital download. The album is produced by longtime friend and producer of Tooth & Nail, Aaron Sprinkle (Acceptance, Anberlin, The Almost) and mixed by Jason Suecof (August Burns Red, The Black Dahlia Murder, Job for a Cowboy). In a press release the band stated what the name of the new album means. With the current state of how the world is, they believe it was necessary to elaborate on it. Through their eyes, they see the world being harmful and destructive. Lyrically the album will focus on what they have always done.

"With true life issues in this world, at large I grab them and put my personal viewpoints on them. This can range from science to politics," says lead vocalist Ryan Clark, explaining the new album. "More and more this world is losing its morals and values. The album will be about (how) less and less things (are) being held in a sacred manner. Also it will mention how we disagree with the modern way of thinking."

In any given situation we are called upon to show action when a conflict is understood. As Christians we are called to pray for others, especially those who have not recognized the call of the Lord. The album's first single will be the song "Collapsing," which talks about continuing the battle of winning souls no matter how hardened hearts may be.

The World Is A Thorn is promised to be the heaviest release yet by the group. Even though this was said about their fourth release, *Storm The Gates Of Hell*, the bar has been raised to a whole new level. Clark believes this was the right direction to take the band, because naturally it is what they do best.

"It all came out naturally when I started writing. I took an approach where I wasn't going to hold anything back," Clark comments on the writing process. "Most of the demo tracks became much faster as I pushed along. There is a classic thrash element to the record. Everyone will see an obvious boost to the intensity of it."

Storm The Gates Of Hell delivered on its promises of being aggressive, while at the same time throwing in a number of surprises. Clark's vocals stepped up a notch with higher screams, which had never been done before. *The World Is A Thorn* will be growing more in the case of vocal power.

"Vocally it's going to be an expansion on what I've been doing on the last couple of records," Clark says. "Choruses will contain parts between screaming and singing. The singing

CKING ORK TO BE DONE

BY DANIEL GARCIA

parts are a little grittier with some edge added to it. You will tell it was pushed a little bit higher. As for the screaming stuff, it comes out naturally after years of trying to make my voice sound a certain way. I've come to a point where I am comfortable doing it without hearing something in my head and contemplating it. It's more of a natural sound."

The vibe of the album will be similar to their first self-titled release. Unlike the ballads on *Storm The Gates Of Hell* and their third album, *The Triptych*, this new album will have a couple of ballads that won't sound too pop-like. They will be more dark and moody, but not to the point of being depressing. For their single "Collapsing," it introduces itself with a steady computerized beat sound effect, just like the ones used on *Summer Of Darkness*. The guitars deliver a palm-muted thrash rhythm during the verses with whammy bar-like screams in the background. You might catch yourself head nodding to the easy-to-sing-along-to chorus.

Another reason the band went forward with a heavier sound is completely because it is what they like to hear. When starting fresh in the heavy music scene, Clark was involved with Focal Point and Training for Utopia, which was known as noisecore.

"At that time it was just a phase/stage, because that was what we were into being that young," Clark says. "I grew up listening to bands like Machine Head and Fear Factory, which are heavy bands that have a melodic side."

Over the span of Demon Hunter albums, they have featured guest vocals from Howard Jones of Killswitch Engage, Bruce Fitzhugh of Living Sacrifice, Mike Williams (ex-vocalist of The Agony Scene), Brock Lindow of 36 Crazyfists and Trevor McNevan of Thousand Foot Krutch. *The World Is A Thorn* will guest star frontman Bjorn Strid of Soilwork and ex-vocalist of Scar Symmetry Christian Alvestam. Soilwork is a band Demon Hunter has followed and have been longtime fans of. Recently, Clark has been becoming addicted to Scar Symmetry and has recognized the vocal talent of Alvestam. Also appearing on the record is frontman Dave Peters of Throwdown, who has been an old friend to Demon Hunter.

"Dave Peters has been a great friend to us," Ryan explains. "He has really good voice control and an amazing range. For the screaming parts of the songs he has been a great help."

With this new album fans will see a couple of new faces. Right after the dust settled when *Storm The Gates Of Hell* was released, longtime band guitarist and brother to Ryan, Don Clark, parted ways with the band on reasons being more time needed towards personal life and dedication to the graphic design company Invisible Creature, which is run by both Clark brothers. Ethan Luck has played guitar since *The Triptych* and left because of demanding responsibilities drumming for Relient K.

Patrick Judge, who was a fill-in guitarist for the *Storm The Gates Of Hell Tour*, is now a full-time member of Demon Hunter. His guitar skills have been proven to be unique for Demon Hunter and have helped create such an amazing album.

"Patrick was a fill-in and now he is part of the band," Clark said. "He is a crazy, good and young guy and he is great. He eats, sleeps and breathes guitar. Patrick is the reason this album has a thrashy element to it. Mostly he grew up on Pantera and Metallica and fans will notice that on the new record. His finger work is really fast and I think it will be an obvious thing to notice."

"It is going to be hard without Don at my side.
Don was the person I usually would bounce ideas off of.
I have to get in the zone and write ideas down.
It comes out naturally and organic for me,
I just have to be in a zone where that is all I'm thinking about."

Rhythm guitar has been replaced with Ryan Helm, who plays in The Ascendicate. Clark promoted this band to Solid State. Helm was the perfect choice for the fact of him not having a family to raise and being young with a desire to play whenever possible.

"I went out to see them play in North Carolina. He was a great guitar player and a really cool guy. It worked out great, because The Ascendicate works on a part-time basis, much less than Demon Hunter. We reached out to him and thought he was interested. In fact, he already has played some shows with us." Original bass player, Jon Dunn, is still rolling with Demon Hunter along with Yogi Watts, who has been the drummer since *The Triptych*.

Through the midst of change everything has worked out with the new members who are already seen as family. Having new members in the band didn't stop Clark from keeping up the reputation that Demon Hunter has of writing amazing songs. Although his brother helped in the writing process, Clark has written material by himself in the past. On *The Triptych* Ryan did most of the writing and the fact that Demon Hunter has released four albums in the past has let the band feel confident in their sound.

"It is going to be hard without Don at my side," Clark says. "Don was the person I usually would bounce ideas off of. I have to get in the zone and write ideas down. It comes out naturally and organic for me, I just have to be in a zone where that is all I'm thinking about. Sometimes things come really fast and really slow. I may be thinking for two hours and only come up with a couple of good lines. No matter what my thoughts are I write them down and that way I have a blueprint of what I want to write about."

The Blessed Resistance, an online Demon Hunter fan community, can be on the lookout near time of the new album being released, because the group over time will flush out bits of information regarding the album. Demon Hunter will be planning tours for the summer of 2010 and those who are in the community will receive information before it is released to the public. For the first time ever Demon Hunter plans on doing an international tour as well.

Many Demon Hunter followers at times wonder why the band does not tour full-time because of its success. The band does realize they earned more success than expected. This includes Demon Hunter being on the cover of *Revolver* in 2006, having music videos played on MTV2 and Fuse. Their music videos on YouTube receive outstanding multiple views per day. Clark feels as if he gets the best of both worlds with being in Demon Hunter and holding the position of being Art Director at Tooth & Nail Records. A lot of bands play full-time while having part-time jobs back home and Clark has never wanted to be part of that. Unlike most bands, Demon Hunter doesn't desire to get burnt-out doing 300 shows a year. Being on stage is a blessing for the band and by playing less live it gives more of a personal connection to the fans when they do tour.

"We think putting out five albums in seven years is pretty decent," Clark says. "Demon Hunter has blessed many people and we take that seriously. We don't tour full-time for many reasons, but at the same time when we do tour, it means that much for us. To have Demon Hunter not tour all the time and go according to our personal schedules, I think helps us have a mindset of being able to do this a long time."

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Ohio Avenue

Album: *The Sound* | **Release date:** February 16, 2010 | **Home**: Dora, Alabama
Members: Derek Williams – Lead Vocals, Guitar, Keyboards | Casey Mitchell – Lead Guitar | Chad Defoor – Drums | Macbook – Bass (Chad's briefcase)
RIYL: "Always a hard question to answer. Maybe a mix of Coldplay, Maroon 5 and Fall Out Boy."
What's one of the most memorable things (either good, bad or funny) that's happened at one of your shows? "One time we played this show for a college Bible study that was held in the building of the local brewery. We were setting our gear up when a few of the pipes burst. Beer went all over us and our gear. It was funny yet horrifying at the same time."
If you could ask God one question, what would you ask Him? "We would ask Him where He came from."
Name 3 bands that, had they not released a certain album at a certain time ... you would not exist as a band. "Derek – *The Beautiful Letdown* by Switchfoot; KC – *Reset* EP by Mute Math; Chad – *Who We Are* by Lifehouse."
If there was another band and another album that you could give everyone as a present for Christmas, what album would that be? Why? "Steven Seagal – *Songs from the Crystal Cave*. This is because underneath all of those face punches and arm breaks, we always knew there was a soft heart. Ha ha."
If you had a chance to perform for most of the televised world and play just one song, which song would you play ... and why? "Probably the song, 'Catch Me' that is on our new album, because it has more of a mass appeal."
What is one belief, conviction, idea or passion that you honestly think might've been deposited inside you or given to you by God? "Being a follower of Christ, we want to strive to be like Him. Our whole lives, especially as Americans, we struggle with being selfish. For us, we try to focus on helping others who haven't been as fortunate as us. We partner with two organizations – Compassion International (compassion.com) and She Dances (shedances.org). If we can make an impact on someone else's life, then what we go through has all been worth it."
What's the best video on YouTube (what would the keywords to search for it be)? "Clap On Beard."
What's a secret or little-known fact about your band (or one of your band members) that would make you the darlings of the music world if we all knew it? "We all really love kids. (Derek) My 2-year-old travels everywhere with us and the other guys are like family to him. They take care of him as if he was one of their own."

ROCK AND ROLL TOWN HALL

See full interview with artist at hmmag.com

DAY OF FIRE FRONTMAN JOSH BROWN WAS IN A DARK PLACE WHEN HE WROTE THE SONGS FOR *LOSING ALL*, WHERE HE LEARNED THE MEANING OF THOSE WORDS.

"The album as a whole was written in a very hard time in my life," confesses Brown. "I was separated from my wife. I was living away from her. I was really in a dark place. That's where a lot of the songs came from – just dealing with the fact that the woman that I love ... we weren't together. 'Hello Heartache' definitely deals with that. 'Airplane' deals with that. The whole album deals with the heartache and the struggles of going through a separation. At the end of the record there is this song, 'The Dark Hills,' which is probably the most spiritual song on the record. It really deals with the fact that we don't just find God when everything is going great in our lives. For me, I realize that in the darkest times of my life, that's when I find God is still there."

The old adage – that struggle produces the best art – is proved true with this 13-song rock record. Brown and his band, together with producer Rogers Masson, wrote and arranged an album with too much angst, frustration and heart-on-sleeve emotion to get ignored. All the right dirty rock and roll guitar sounds were dialed in for this one. Even the stops and rests on the album seem calculated and perfectly placed. When a line about not letting go of a loved one is repeated as if repetition will make the singer believe it to be true (like the bittersweet tune "Never Goodbye," where Brown gets to vent about losing a loved one before having a chance to express how much he loves them). It's apparent that the words were not sketched out on a napkin as an afterthought, but that the music serves the words and vice-versa.

The staccato riffs that provide steps for the resentful vocals aimed at an unwelcome visitor named heartache are like cathartic, angry shots fired from someone with something to say. They give way to a melodic chorus feel like waves of submission to an emotion that isn't quite fun ("Hello Heartache"). It doesn't take much imagination to imagine a song like this evoking a reaction from a rock radio audience.

When Brown says things like, "I'm more proud of this record than any record I've ever done," or "I think it's the best collection of songs I've ever done," it sounds like he means it - even though almost every single artist in the history of popular music has said it about his or her latest album.

"I also think it's the most honest record I've ever done. Even though that's my goal every time, I feel like I was able to communicate feelings and thoughts much more clearly with this record. So, I'm excited about it.

"When I write, I just try to be honest. My goal in writing is to connect with rock and rollers. At one time I was a rock and roller that did not have faith. I did not follow God. I came to know Jesus, and my goal was still to connect to the same people." This points to a slight frustration with the Christian music industry. Though don't paint Brown as one of those bitter artists that is somehow angry at the CBA market or the church it serves. These are thoughts he shared when asked; rather than just offering up complaints to any pair of ears that'll listen. There's a big difference.

"The music business is a business – whether you paint the name 'Christian' on it or not," he points out. "It's just about selling records. When I came into it, to me it was about doing what I felt God wants us to do. I assumed that it was everybody's goal, too. There's a lot of great people in it. I think if you know that going in, you'll do a lot better."

When pressed for solutions, he offered one: "If I could change anything, I guess I would … I think the Christian music industry only tries to connect to Christian people. I think to spread the Gospel, you have to do the opposite. You have to connect to people that do not believe."

Between the release of the second Day of Fire album (the 2006 release, *Cut & Move*) and *Losing All*, the band changed labels, management and booking agents. Besides navigating the turbulent waters described earlier, this interim period saw the band going out on the road with Daughtry for some 90+ shows.

"He's an awesome guy," gushes Brown. "Over the past two years, when we didn't have a booking agent or a label and all that, he took us out for 90 shows. He's a good friend and he believes in the band. When no one else would throw us a bone, he threw us a bone. He's a great musician and a really good person."

Daughtry also lent production to the songs "Airplane" (an epic Aerosmith-style rocker ballad that expresses the yearning to be with the one you're apart from) and "Hello Heartache."

After a lengthy time with no label, Brown and company hooked up with Razor & Tie (home to All That Remains, as well as recent additions Norma Jean). "They've been cool. So far everything they've done they've made better. I feel like they really know how to market. I feel like they know how to make records better. We recorded the record and mixed it ourselves originally and the mixes didn't line up with how they thought the mixes should be, so they hooked us up with a great mixer. It just seems like they know what they're doing and they're excited about the music."

And Rogers Masson? "He's a great friend and genius producer," adds Brown. "We hooked up with Rogers and he inspired us to go further."

When the former frontman of Full Devil Jacket got saved and formed a new band called Day of Fire, lots of attention was paid to his "testimony" in Christian circles. Seems every congregation loves to hear an inspiring story of redemption, but quick fixes and never a wavering moment seem to be the only acceptable script. By the grace of God, Brown and his mates keep going, but this isn't a man that is afraid to be honest about his temptations and real-life conflict. You could say he's an overcomer, but just not a pretender or a fake.

"Oh, man," he answers when asked about ongoing struggles with chemical addiction, "I mean, life itself is a struggle. I believe the definition of the Gospel is peace in the midst of turmoil. There's always thoughts in my mind where I just want to run away from everything. Grab a bottle of Jack Daniel's and smoke some pot and run away from it all, but I can't do that. I've got a family. I've got a wife and kids. I've got a band. I guess addiction is always there. Not allowing it to control your mind and your life – that's always a goal of mine. So, drugs and alcohol are always going to be a temptation."

And his marriage? Well, that one's a miracle. "About six months ago we got back together. It was a miracle for me. We've been together now for 10 years. We've been married for eight. It was the hardest thing I've ever gone through – even beyond drugs. I always knew that we would be back together. I hoped that we would be back together. I will love her for the rest of my life. God brought us back together. It was a miracle. Straight-up."

Sometimes knowing a little background information fills the story out a bit, doesn't it? Even the details behind the artwork mean more when it's understood that a real live human being struggled through this. The cover pictures a compass and all the directions are backwards. "When your heart and your mind aren't right," Brown explains, "you can't find the right direction to go. You can't connect with God until you are truthful and you say, 'Okay God. I'm in a jam. I messed it up.' All those songs are just different aspects of that."

Now that *Losing All* has released, the band is heading out on the road for three months with Cold and Nonpoint. "I feel like, with Day of Fire, we've never connected with our core audience and I think we'll be able to do that with our next record." If this connection happens, don't be surprised to hear a lot more of Day of Fire.

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BY DOUG VAN PELT

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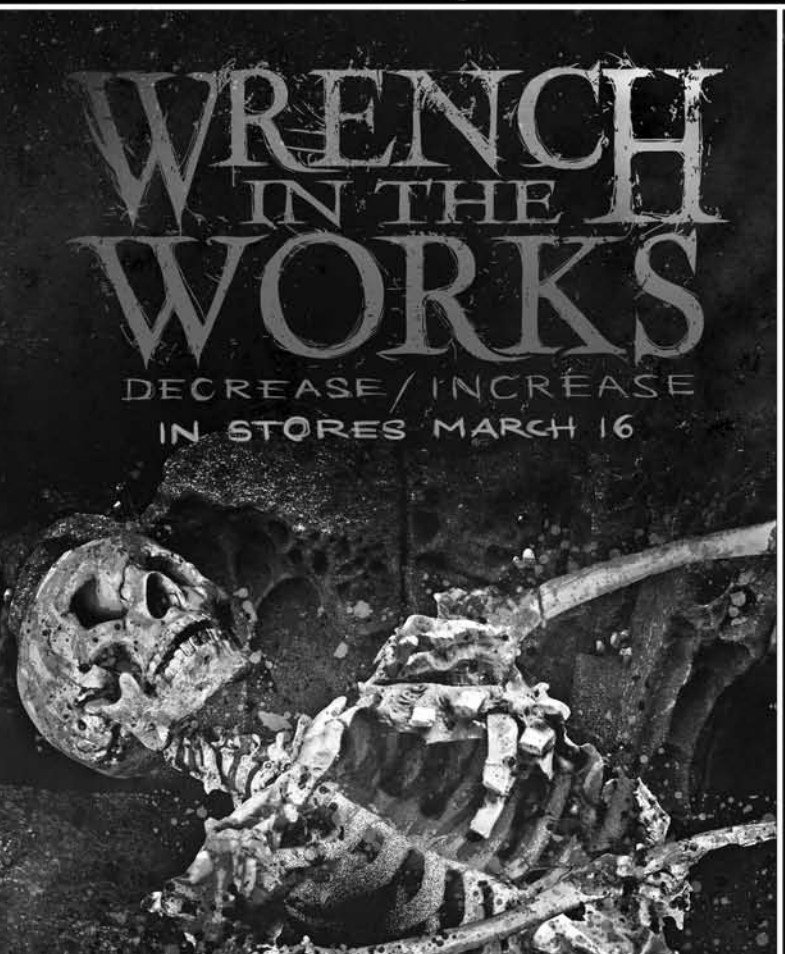

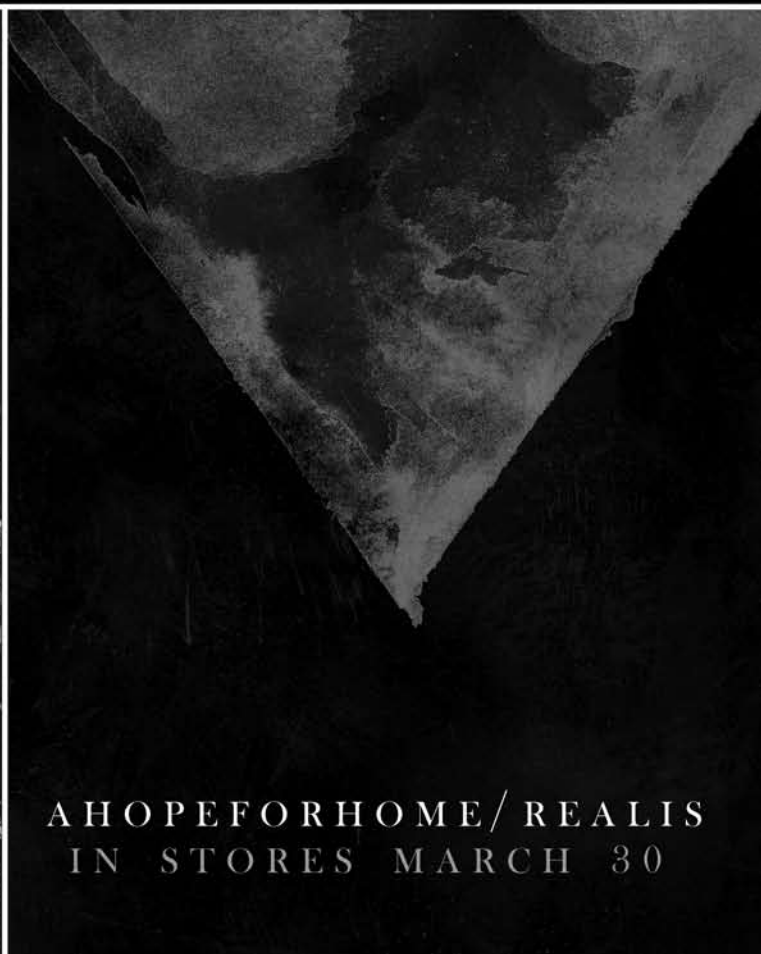

What **The Used** Says

THIS SIT-DOWN INTERVIEW WITH THE USED BASSIST JEPH HOWARD WAS ONE OF THOSE RELAXING TIMES, WHERE EACH OF US COULD SIT BACK AND TALK. IT WAS HOURS BEFORE HIS BAND WOULD GO ON AFTER THE ALMOST AT LA ZONA ROSA. SOUNDCHECKS WERE PROBABLY BEHIND THEM AND ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS THE "HANG OUT AND WAIT" TIME THAT COMES TO THOSE THAT DON'T RUN LATE. SEQUESTERED ON A COUPLE OF COUCHES IN A SMALL DRESSING ROOM, JEPH AND I TALKED SNOWBOARDING, UTAH, MUSIC AND GOD. IT WAS NICE WHEN STANDING TO LEAVE AND REALIZING THAT DOING YOUR JOB CAN BE SOMETHING THAT OTHERS ENJOY – EVEN IN THE COURSE OF SO-CALLED "WORK." I GUESS IT'S TRUE – I LOVE MY JOB.

Photo: Paul Brown

On the DVD with Artwork, you talked about wanting to do something new for The Used. I'm curious how you guys collectively came to that decision and how hard it was to let go of the familiar and explore new territory?

It wasn't really that hard. It was kind of just a conscious decision that we know that we have grown up in this band, really. I mean we have grown up playing music together. We have grown up, sort of, starting this unknown band in the middle of nowhere that sort of got found ... that turned into something bigger and then a little bit bigger. Now we've been touring around for about 10 years now, ya know? You can't help what is around you or your surroundings, all the people you know, all the things that you do sort of make up who are. Ya know what I mean? It's the same with music, like all the stuff we're around and all of our influences that start coming together to make us change a little bit, so over time no matter what, we change. I think to the point where we were at when this record came out, like we were sick of everything. We were stuck on the same kind of tours, we were stuck with the same kind of bands, we were stuck with the same kind of labels that people were labeling us with some genre that we never liked (and) were never even a part of. Like screamo and emo and all that scene. That's cool, but that came from another scene. That was a scene from a scene from a scene. Like we are not going to be a part of that, like … we're here … in the middle of nowhere, we have a whole scene propped up and was going on and that scene is awesome. We got lumped into that sort of thing. And, with this record coming around, we were just sick of everything. We actually got new managers – whole new management team. We got some new people labelers and we got new people accountants, ya know what I mean? It's like intertwining business people, like we were sick of almost being used in a way. Like for their stuff and their tours and their things and even our drummer – he is not new, he has been with us for about three years and actually the record before *Lies For The Liars*, it's a long answer but I'm…

Good, good.

Lies For Liars – he was there and recorded that whole thing. He didn't actually record, he wrote with us, but from then on this really is his first full-length record that he recorded with us. Sort of like a release for him in a way. Just having him around, too, has actually influenced to change our band musically and, as far as friendship goes and everything, we are tighter than (bleep), by far really. Like friends, music, everything we feel so strong about each other today. And coming out of this recording *Artwork*, it seems like in the past couple of records got a little cleaned up too much maybe? And a sense we are being sort of "genre-ized," if that's a word. We love messy music. I love messy music. I love dirty music. I like real music, ya know what I mean? We wanted to be more real, we wanted to be live. Ya know, like, gross, dirty live. We wanted to be like … some of our favorite records are just simple and easy to sing along to. And we wanted this record to also be like the anthem. Like you come to shows, you know the words to that song. It's like an anthem, it's just … easy to sing along to, easy to understand, but it's so in-depth and passionate in the background and it's just more than that. And that's kind of an idea of how this record started really. Long answer (he laughs).

That sounds like a perfect place to be in a band.

It feels pretty good.

I was going to ask you to further define "gross pop" and elaborate on that.

"Gross pop" is kind of serious and a joke, too. It's like screamo, that's the most retarded name ever, come on. Like emo is the most retarded name ever. Really! Like, oh my god, like Led Zeppelin. Like Nirvana, whatever. But the whole idea with gross pop is just like … we're sick of people trying to label us. We are a rock band, we have said that for years. But if you want to make a label, we will make our label and we'll take whatever we're going to be. How's that? Ya know? So we are going to be called

gross pop. And we're not the first gross pop band and we're not the last. There're tons of gross pop bands. Like, for instance, Weezer, *Pinkerton* – it's catchy and it's messy and it's dirty, but still sort of poppy, ya know? That's a great record, super easy to sing along to, easy to remember, like, it's a fun record and it's kind of dirty and dark ya know? Even Beck. I love Beck's stuff. It's gross pop, I guess. Like messy and noisy, too.

How do you know when you've finished a song by The Used? Where is that line where more tweaking and adjusting starts to diminish the final result? And how do you gauge where you are in that process?
It's a hard thing, I guess. I mean, there is nothing perfect. Nothing ever written is perfect. But that's the kind of idea behind this record. Perfection isn't the most important thing. It's the energy involved in it. There're mistakes in these songs, there's (bleep) ups in these songs. A lot of people use computers now so much for recording that they're putting things like drums to make sure the drums are totally inline 100% and everything. These drums sound perfectly in line; these drums sound the same, like a snare. Because sometimes no matter what, you aren't going to hit it as hard, because you're playing. We didn't use any of that in this record. The drum sound and the other sounds are what they are like. We played it straight and it is what it is. Which to me makes it more real. That's what they always used to do and why aren't they doing it now? Just because we have computers doesn't mean we should use it that way. I think some of that stuff sucks the goal out of it, really.

Yeah, I don't think there's such a thing like – maybe there is – synthetic leather. Part of leather's quality is mistakes and scarring. How do you know when a song is good ... that it's solid – it's a keeper?
We just let it go, we let it be what it is. Let it be.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
It's funny how he keeps changing races, I think? (he laughs) Really, I mean… I'm not religious at all, ya know? Like, I grew up in a very religious place right? My dad's side, his family is really Mormon. But my dad never was ... he was kind of the black sheep in the family, like, wasn't into religion, thought it was kind of a joke. Ya know what I mean? My mom's side is all Catholic and … I was just kind of in the middle. My mom is not religious at all. So, like, I saw the reality of both sides, I think, and living where I live I saw the reality of everyone else's religion and how they lived and what they did. I was a nerdy kid. I still am kind of nerdy, but I was a big Boy Scout. We would go to the church and do Boy Scout stuff, which is weird, because everybody knew everybody. This is probably not answering your question, but it's just weird to remember. Everybody knew everybody, because they all went to church together. So I was kind of an outcast, because I didn't go to church and at the school it's the same thing. You get a class off to go to (this) off-campus thing... Because the church is on campus, it's really ... it's totally illegal, but it doesn't (bleep) matter. But since I never went to that, I didn't really fit in as far as that went, because all my friends had to go and their parents made them. But, in my last year of high school, I only had one class. I think people can believe in whatever as long as they're happy. I just think … you shouldn't believe something to make you a better person. That, to me, is kind of … that's weird. And I'm not a preacher. I don't really care. I don't know, I just…(It's) funny how stories and things can change events of other people. That's kind of the way I see a lot of religions, ya know? Like money... Money is such an object there. Why is money such an object? Mormonism – you have to pay tithing to church. It's like … I thought religions were supposed to be helping people. It's supposed to be of this "God guy" and blah, blah, blah. Ya know, why are you taking money that we are making? I just think it seems weird.

Good point… What do you think of His claims to be "the way, the truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
I don't even know where that's from, who said that?

Uh, the Gospel passage…
Really?

The quote is attributed to Jesus.
Um … to me … (that's) a weird thing. Like I believe, things in the past made habits for certain things ya know? Like, there is all sorts of (bleep) that happens, but one thing that is crazy, is the first religion that ever existed. The very first civilization that ever existed, going back in time to the Sumerians, right? It's like there is nothing before these people, maybe cavemen and all of a sudden out of nowhere these groups of people came together. Like, they started plowing. You can buy books on these Sumerians. And there's, like, thousands of inventions which we use now. Like with the calendar – time really. We'll come up with seconds and minutes, ya know what I mean? They came up with all of this stuff. What they believe in religious-wise? Not even religious wise – reality-wise – is pretty much all the same. All the religions combined into what they believe in, which is kind of weird, too, but also with God and all of this stuff. It's weird how … something that people were a part of, sort of over here changed and molded into this … thing, ya know what I mean? It's not even originally intended to be, ya know what I mean? I kind of like old, old, old-school stuff like that. I don't know. I'm way into that kind of old stuff. I think it's weird how their life turned into like that… Like Adam and Eve, but it wasn't religious like that. It's just weird how, there's stories and lives turned into something that now... Like something above and beyond what it ever was originally, ya know what I mean? It's crazy. Have you ever looked into that stuff? It will blow your mind. It's amazing actually. It shows inscriptions – the pictures, like Adam and Eve shows like a goddess holding Adam on her lap and there's Gods in the background looking at her and stuff. It was supposedly like a mixture, like the gods needed to make a… I don't know … I could really get into it. It made like a hybrid god/person thing and that's kind of what they were into – the Sumerians. We are half breeds of God and stuff like that, it's pretty crazy.

Like, what part of the earth?
Where all the wars always been – Iraq and Iran – that whole area. Like the oldest civilization of everything. Like everything is spread out there, it's just crazy.

If there was a band or person in the music industry that was like an angry beehive that is probably best left alone – who or what is that entity and what would they be capable of if so stirred up?
Um … the label maybe? Ya know, it's weird, labels and radio stations are always the same. A lot of radio DJs are really cocky. I'll be cocky in a way. I have friends that work like…each state that you fly in has reps from the label, those people are usually pretty cool, because all they're doing is to get the radio to play your songs and kind of help you out, and try to set something up between you, the radio and the label, ya know what I mean? They're actually really cool, but they have to meet with radio station guys. They have to bribe them and be, like, "Come on, play our band, please? You know you like it, all these kids like it. If you play it, it will be good for your radio station; it would be good for us." They'll come up to me and, you know, like every band that we met and worked with are amazing and nice, respectful, but these radio station people are cocky and snobby and like … it's insane. The real rock stars aren't in the band, but they're the radio people. That's weird. I mean, I've never been in contact with radio station people like that, ya know, but that's amazing to hear that kind of for a minute. We've had ups and downs, every band does with a label. Our label, honestly ... there're a lot of good people who work there. Some people aren't really great, really cocky and think they know everything. They even think they know things and have opinions about your band and they aren't even a part of it. They try to question you and tell you what you need to do, because, "I ... me being who I am, because I work with who knows what, believe this is what your band should do ... this thing. You need to listen to me because I'm one person." Ya know, who are you? There are a million kids that are saying a different answer than you are, but since you're this person that thinks he knows what you're talking about, then all of a sudden it's like … it's weird. But the thing is, some of these people you have to like, their ultimate goal is to make sure your band does good. Even though their cockiness ... you still have to, sort of play this game a little bit. It's like "Oh, okay, well, maybe you're right." You still have to play this little game to go where you want it to go ya know? It's kind of (bleep), but at the same time record companies are going down anyways, so it doesn't really matter.

What are a couple of specific examples of things the media has done that make you angry? On the converse, what are one or two specific examples of things the media have done that have pleased you or given you a sense of, "Yeah, that's how the media should handle things." (news, network or mainstream media…)
That's a good question. I think it could be 50/50 always. I mean, no offense, but any and every interview you do, is interpreted differently, worded differently. Like, whoever edits it and puts it together, might hate your band, and you say one thing out of context, they'll use it against you. It happens all the time. Like, I can't think of anything particular, but retarded stuff. You say something like a joke that you hate something and they will put it up in the front as the headline, ya know, "The Used hate like this" and I can't believe they would ever do this to me, ya know, out of context. That's pretty (bleep) and then they'll focus on the negative. A lot of interviews are really focused on negative things about your band and negative things about people saying that. Not the whole thing, of course, but they try to find gossip. Like, there's this drama with us and My Chemical Romance. Those guys are like our brother band. We toured with them for, like, 4 months maybe. Our sound guy ended up quitting and becoming their drummer and our tour manager ended up quitting and becoming their manager. We had deep connections and there was a little drama for a minute, but it wasn't a big deal. But press is what it is. It blew out of proportion where there was this war between both sides and they're making it worse than it ever was; and so it probably was making them angry and it was probably making us angry at the same time. Somebody said something like, "Oh they said (bleep) you guys," and I'm sure they didn't. But since press is what it is and they want to hear this, it turned into this hip-hop battle for a while. Good things? I mean, ya know, sometimes it's kind of funny, because that's when press thinks they can put in their lies a little bit to see if it makes it work at all or see if things happen a certain way. That to me is fine. (he laughs)

I got a list of bands and I want you to tell me which ones are better.
Okay, cool.

The Almost or Underoath
Ya know, I've seen them back to back. I really like the drummer of The Almost. Joe is awesome, a nice dude.

"I think people can believe in whatever as long as they're happy. I just think … you shouldn't believe something to make you a better person. That, to me, is kind of weird. And I'm not a preacher. I don't really care."

Sting or The Police
Hmm… I would say The Police. There is something about the original way of tension in that band – how they didn't really like each other. Ya know what I mean? Not, like, all of them, but Sting and the drummer guy, I can't remember his name – they had big issues, but that tension and the way they work together, really made that band, I think, in a way. I mean, the music, too, but the tension helped.

Genesis or Phil Collins?
Genesis.

The Raconteurs or the The White Stripes?
Ya know, The Raconteurs. I mean, I can't ever say their name. I can't even spell it, but I like them. The White Stripes are cool, but I never got that into it as much. The other dude, in The Raconteurs… The guitar player in that band was cool. He had kind of a Beatles feel to him. Ya know what I mean? Not Jack White, but…

Jack's Mannequin or Something Corporate?
Don't really know either of those bands.

How much of an art is the ability to understand another person's point of view? Why or why not is that important?
That's an awesome question, because that's so cool. I'd say 100%, because art and music, anything artistic is 50% the artist and 50% the viewers. Ya know what I mean? Because you could see anything and not like it, but that's your take on whatever this thing has been done. Like, the other person's heart and soul is in it, but you have to put something into it to understand what it is. That's what it seems like to me. And, just because you don't like something, just means maybe you're not putting the right energy or the right whatever into it and it just doesn't click with you. Ya know what I mean?

Okay, pick an example of a controversial debate and try to articulate the argument for the opposite side of your opinion. I've got a few debates. The death penalty…
Um … so, pick the side of…?

Yeah, and argue for their stand. Argue for them, like a defense attorney.
That's hard, because I'm very … um, very fair-based. So, my answers are always 50/50. So, for something like this, I'm for it and against it. Because the death penalty is ... if somebody really (bleep) up and somebody that really sucks and somebody is just like (bleep) and like … what are they doing? Do they even care? ...To kill them? That's not fair, but jails are overrun because of douche bags, ya know what I mean? People that are bad people. Like there *are* bad people in the world, but at the same time … who's to judge them and say they need to die for that? So, at the same time… That's even a hard question to answer for your side, probably.

Evolution vs. Creation?
Um... ya know, 50/50 – like that stuff I was talking about. I think it's 50/50. I still do. I mean, I'm not a religious person. I don't believe there is this magical being that has, like, a horse that flies down and drops, like, seeds on the planet and makes them, ya know what I mean? ...Makes them grow like that. But, ya know, like everything came from something. Everything started somewhere and is expanding, ya know what I mean? Um, just because there is, like, all this life on this planet, ya know what I mean? People are so, like, "Oh, must be magic!" Ya know what I mean? At the same time, it's like everything's happening – everything's folding, everything's moving. Like, dinosaurs were here and they had their chance. Didn't work out. They are gone, ya know what I mean? It's like waves. It's almost like things are like a wave, ya know? The sun really is all this power, ya know what I mean? And all this energy. If the sun wasn't here, planet might not be around, ya know? Energy comes from inside out. But, back in the day, people used to worship the sun. Ya know what I mean? If you go to New Zealand, people worship… I just found this out today: People worship the mountains and the oceans and the rivers, ya know what I mean? And they worship the nature of everything. Really, nature ultimately. Like, there's no rainforest, there's no life, right? We coexist with everything on the planet.

Gun control vs. the NRA?
Um, gun control pretty much means no guns, really. Right?

Well, no. That could be debated, but let's just say really tight gun control vs. the NRA. Both of them have restrictions, I guess or limited. It's extreme on both sides, but both sides are probably pretty moderate.
My dad owns a bunch of guns and he has them for protection and stuff like that. He's a realtor and I guess a lot of times where he's at realtors get jumped and stuff like that. They take them to a house that they haven't been to, like they know he's going to be there. These people meet up and take it to the house and rob them, ya know what I mean? So, my dad carries guns on him all the time. I mean I'm supposed to argue the other side? And the other side be: "Everyone takes your guns away?" Let the government take over everything and it's already slowly happening (he laughs a bit). I couldn't even argue the other side, I don't think, at all. There's that thing: "Guns don't kill people, people kill people," ya know , but… That's tough! Trying to argue an opposite side of how you believe sort of is like … giving in a little bit, ya know what I mean? The reason to not have guns? I guess if there were less guns, would there be less murders with guns? Then you think about Europe and people get stabbed all the time in Europe, which is what I would rather be shot than stabbed. Stabbed is so, like, up-close and up-front. To stab somebody you have to be angry. You have to have hate to stab somebody, ya know? That happens in England a lot compared to being shot. In Japan there's no guns at all, really. I mean it's pretty rare to have a gun there. And there really aren't that many super violent crimes, I guess, ya know? It's a different culture completely, so you can't really argue that at all. That's just one of those things that they need to find out. It's too bad that you can't test it and see what would happen. It's like a cultural difference really.

Pro-Choice vs. Pro-Life
My honest honest opinion? I'm definitely Pro-Choice. 100%. Because, like, people are having kids that don't want these kids and they're bringing all these kids into these places and they're ruining these kids' lives, really. Ya know what I mean? Like, taking these kids and sort of keeping them not really caring about them, ya know what I mean? And getting money from the government and, like, doing that or they're just having kids and they are really young and giving them up for adoption and then they're growing up in adoption places and sometimes getting adopted, ya know what I mean? It kind of strains their minds a little bit and stuff and, ya know, I don't believe some of the lives are really alive, ya know what I mean? Like really! I don't believe so. To argue the other side? To argue the other side on that (he laughs)... It's weird, because if you believe so firmly in something to try to argue the other side of things, like I'm saying, it's really like switching your mind totally out of sync in a way. I mean, I guess some people say a life is a life no matter what, ya know? Which is kind of true, but I mean ... if it was my choice and my life and I was born this way, ya know what I mean? I guess I have met many … I'm not saying it's right for everybody… I guess that's why I'm Pro-Choice, I think, because if people want to keep their kid, that's great. Ya know what I mean? But if people want to have the kid and give it up for adoption, then that's great, ya know what I mean? But it's how they believe, ya know? I'm Pro-Choice because people should do what they believe is right for them. So, to argue the other side of that would be: "This is my way. Listen to me, because I'm the one telling you the answers." Ya know what I mean? To me, that seems wrong. You can't tell people what to do and that's telling people what to do. In a way it's like gun control – going back to that, like, I'm taking these guns, because you haven't killed somebody yet, but you will because you own a gun. Ya know what I mean? Like...

Acting like a radio DJ?
Yeah, yeah! That's all of it, it's like people being too cocky, really (he laughs).

✖ [See the rest of this interview at hmmag.com]

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Album reviews

49 ALBUMS 57 ENTERTAINMENT, BOOKS & GADGETS

FLATFOOT 56

BLACK THORN

It was Poison who once reminded us that we don't need nothing but a good time. Decades later, it's Flatfoot 56 who's actually satisfying that appetite for a rock and roll party. Of course, the limited constraints of the Celtic rock genre might not appeal to all, but given a chance, only the hardest of leprechaun hearts could deny the sheer good time that Flatfoot delivers on their latest. Black Thorn jigs, pulses, sways, mesmerizes and kicks up the heels – sometimes all within the same song structure.

The title track jumpstarts the parade in classic fashion, conjuring comparisons to Dropkick Murphys' "Famous for Nothing." Meanwhile, "Courage" maintains the energy, albeit with more straightforward rock and roll energy. "Smoke Blower" completes the rock progression with a straight hard rock turn (although bagpipes make a slight appearance). That's not to say the antics and roots are abandoned. In fact, it's clear Flatfoot 56 realizes why you've come to them in the first place and "We Grow Stronger" delivers one of the band's best tracks yet. Its infectious energy, anthemic pulse and Josh Robieson's mandolin all come together in a total triumph.

Overall, with 13 tracks clocking in at just over 37 minutes, you know you're in for an all-out good time that's sure to wrap up well before you're ready. It's the classic "leave 'em wantin' more" formula and it's the best way to describe the sentiment after *Black Thorn* is over.

[OLD SHOE] MATT CONNER

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

WRENCH IN THE WORKS

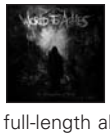
DECREASE/INCREASE

Hardcore can be stagnant, but never with Wrench In The Works. For their latest release *Decrease/Increase*, the Connecticut natives deliver breakneck drumming, slashing guitar licks and sporadic pauses that create a constant state of controlled chaos. Much like Norma Jean's debut release *Bless The Martyr And Kiss The Child*, the tracks contain short intervals of sedation in between cacophony breakdowns as if a monster chase is suddenly halted when the victim finds a temporary hiding place. But unlike those movie scenes, this album never truly relents its intensity. [FACEDOWN] DAN FRAZIER

AS BOLD AS LIONS

MOVING FORWARD

Okay, so within the first two minutes we've got drums big enough to track on a Lady Gaga record, typical-but-solid hardcore bro-vocals, this weird and somehow fitting spoken word-esque middle thing, gang vocals and a brutal, guttural farewell to track one. Track two: blast beats like machine guns and breakdowns like falling bombs. *Moving Forward* complements the battle, lyrically, speaking of a fight for victory against an enemy that comes to steal, kill and destroy. There's a sense of urgency in this hardcore/death/insert-descriptive-word-that-doesn't-make-sense/metal band to share bold truths as they appear, scripturally and to let go of what they're holding onto that gets in the way of a Christ-filled life ("Face of Reality"). For dudes that not only have to compete with an endless supply of genre-specific acts, but also fifty million bands with the word "Lions" in their name, ABAL holds par pretty well. [NEW LINE] LEVI MACALLISTER



WORLD TO ASHES

IN COMTEMPLATION OF DEATH

Hailing all the way from Germany is World to Ashes releasing their first full-length album *In Contemplation of Death*. While Europe is known for its unique metal scene, listeners' ears will pick up the original American metalcore sound. This album promises a nonstop ride of uptempo drumming with melodic metalcore guitar that tends to get repetitive. With Zao-like vocals, W.T.A.'s Christ-influenced lyrics can be easily categorized as gothic-style poetry. Their song "Path of Uncertainty" gives hope to Christians that may be struggling with their faith and not know what to do with it. It tells how God is the support and strength of everyone and to never give up on Him. *In Contemplation of Death* brings the ruckus but it would have been more interesting to show a bit more variety for good measure. Not making every song sound to the same key would be a good start. [WHIRLWIND] DANIEL GARCIA

DAY OF FIRE

LOSING ALL

It's a little difficult to reconcile Josh Brown's Lemmy-fronting-Motorhead vocal during opener "Light 'Em Up," with the slightly-rocking-Coldplay of "Airplane." In other words, *Losing All* sometimes sounds like the conflicting tale of two very different bands. One group wants to rock hard, like a gang of tough guys gargling nails, while the other combo only intends to thump lightly, like a nice, Christian rock band. This makes it more than a little confusing, and awfully hard to bond with the group's latest effort. And that's a shame because the band has a lot of good things to say. "Hello Heartache," for instance, deals openly and honestly with relationship issues, as few other hard rock bands can. But nobody wants to follow the leader until said leader knows where he or she is going. Few will be losing all hesitation to go anywhere with these guys until Day Of Fire chooses its course, and vows to stick with it. [RAZOR & TIE] DAN MACINTOSH

STARFIELD

THE SAVING ONE

Even with the nominations, awards and radio hits, Starfield still seem as an under-the-radar act. Perhaps that's not the case for some fans, but mostly the Neufeld brothers continue to craft worship anthems with electric guitars and crashing drums with the best of them only to find others receiving more acclaim and press. Nevertheless, that doesn't stop them from offering more of the same on *The Saving One*. The title track sounds a bit familiar and generally the guys deliver a more original turn on their lead single. The same could be said for a tune like "Declaration of Dependence," which even in its title is trying a bit too hard. Still, the piano of "Rediscover You" and the softer side of "Absolutely" are worth the price of admission. If anything, this album places itself nicely in the discography, even if it's not the best of the bunch or a great leap forward. [SPARROW] MATT CONNER

ONWARD TO OLYMPAS

THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME

Even with silly posing promotion photos, Onward To Olympas brings serious music when called upon. With hard vocals that can be compared to Tim Lambesis of As I Lay Dying, their debut album, *This World Is Not My Home*, brings a heavy load to the table with Parkway Drive-like guitars and snappy double-bass drumming. The overall sound quality is crisp and clear due to production by Jamie King (Beloved, Between The Buried and Me). On almost every track there are technical guitar licks and gang-up hardcore vocals. Through all the heavy riff-raff, some choruses contain singing parts but it seems to fit well with the style presented. Although they sound fun, their breakdowns may come off as repetitive after a second listen to the album. Nevertheless, Onward To Olympas will have no trouble fitting into the Facedown family. [FACEDOWN] DANIEL GARCIA

STELLAR KART

EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT NOW

Stellar Kart is back at it again with their new album *Everything is Different Now*. To get the ultimate experience of this band, you probably would have to be around the age group of 12-16 on a sugar high bouncing around the house. Though it may be a tad overdone, Stellar Kart does an amazing job at the sound they bring. In some sense it's like Jesus jamming out to some New Found Glory, dare I say? No doubt that this album brings worship lyrics and songs that can be enjoyed with a pop-punk feel. It is clear that through their fourth album release, Stellar Kart don't mind exposing their inner child and have fun blasting away at those four major power chords. The album starts off with some fun hyper pop-punk songs and then has a couple of relaxed acoustic guitar tracks. At least you know what to buy your little brother or sister for their birthday. [INO] DANIEL GARCIA

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Flatfoot 56 *Black Thorn*	04	04*
Wrench In The Works *Decrease/Inscrease*	03	04
As Bold As Lions *Moving Forward*	03*	03
World To Ashes *In Comtemplation Of Death*	03	03
Day Of Fire *Losing All*	04	03
Starfield *The Saving One*	03	03
Onward To Olympas *This World Is Not My Home*	03*	04
Stellar Kart *Everything Is Different Now*	03	02
Fair *The Disappearing World*	04	05
Mattie Montgomery *When The Sons Become Fathers*	03	05
The Hotshot Freight Train *Poetic Devices And Personal Vices*	03	03*
Ajalon *This Good Place*	02*	03*
Close Your Eyes *We Will Overcome*	03	04
Me In Motion *S/T*	03	02
Luminate *S/T*	03	03
The Letter Black *Hanging On By A Thread*	03	03
Not To Reason Why *Would You Hug A Fire?*	04	03*

FAIR
THE DISAPPEARING WORLD

From the opening title track "Disappearing World" and the commercial alt-pop vibe of "Wayside," you may wonder if Fair has successfully channeled The Beatles and Owl City, but they maintain that extra artistic and alternative cool throughout this amazing album. *Disappearing World* is Fair's sophomore release and they avoid the slump with what is sure to be one of the best albums of the year. If you do not already know Aaron Sprinkle as a producer (Anberlin, Demon Hunter, The Almost) or as a solo artist (*Bareface*), you should remember him for Fair. This record is stunningly beautiful and full of unforgettable hooks, melodies and emotional lyrics. To say this is better than their first is a drastic understatement. This is an artist and band at their peak. You can hear it in the quirky arrangements and Aaron's songwriting and vocals have never sounded better. Music producers for TV and film should take note, these are songs that will emote and move any scene. I can hear "Walking In My Sleep" playing at the end of any number of current shows (producers of – *Chuck* are you listening?). Do yourself a favor and buy this one before your friends do so you can be the one to turn them on to their favorite album. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DR. TONY SHORE~~

MATTIE MONTGOMERY
WHEN THE SONS BECOME FATHERS

This spoken word album brings the love of God without any filters. Mattie brings forth powerful convictions and daring statements backed up by Scripture that Christians need to step up to the plate and do what they were born to do. The chains of commercialized Christianity are broken with these words ranging from the true meaning of God's love to examining the spirit of one's self. Listeners beware; *When The Sons Become Fathers* is raw and uncut truth. ~~[CATAPULT] DANIEL GARCIA~~

THE HOTSHOT FREIGHT TRAIN
POETIC DEVICES AND PERSONAL VICES

The Hotshot Freight Train is doing what they do best with their new album *Poetic Devices and Personal Vices*. They deliver with a true Southern rock sound and not the kind of sound done by The Chariot. Having this be their second release on Future Destination Records, this album brings a folk-rock beat with a Southern twang. Most country songs consist of stories and personal testimonies. THFT does just that with lyrics representing real life situations and experiences. The album cover can be a bit misleading with having the band seem like a 1980's metro punk band. Being from Knoxville, Tennessee promises a raw honest sound to the genre. This album has already put the band on the right path with being on Indie Vision-Brandon Jones' Top 30 of 2009. To share a list with musical acts like AFI, Weezer, Alice in Chains and Relient K shows just how dedicated these guys are when it comes to playing good music. Don't bother listening to this album if country makes your ears bleed but perhaps the blend of rock might raise your eyebrow. ~~[FUTURE DESTINATION] DANIEL GARCIA~~

AJALON
THIS GOOD PLACE

Progressive rocker Randy George and company are back with perhaps their best release ever. Okay, when the music quality bar is set this high, that fact is probably irrelevant – this talented group of musicians play a brand of lush, melodic and mesmerizing rock that you either love or hate. But it's the story within the lyrics that really takes the band to the next level. In grandiose Paul O'Neill (Savatage/TSO) fashion, this redemption story is wonderfully and colorfully told. "Not Man" – a highlight track – musically and lyrically portrays a miserable, unreconciled sinner about as perfectly as anything I've heard. For fans of Neal Morse, Kerry Livgren, Spock's Beard and the like. ~~[PROGROCK] JONATHAN SWANK~~

CLOSE YOUR EYES
WE WILL OVERCOME

Close Your Eyes delivers an uncanny intensity ripe with energetic alacrity and instilling rumbles on every track of their debut album *We Will Overcome*. Blurring between screamo (screeching), hardcore (breakdowns, gang chants) and pop punk (rapid drumming, pitch singing) sounds like a cesspit, but these Texas natives successfully manage it by using melodic soars as the glue. The result summons an Anberlin resisting a simultaneous possession by Stretch Arm Strong and New Found Glory. ~~[VICTORY] DAN FRAZIER~~

ME IN MOTION
ME IN MOTION

It's interesting to listen to bands of the same milk churn out varied qualities of their craft. You can wonder why one band "works" while another can't seem to match that certain something, that "it" factor, so to speak. Yet here spins Me in Motion, a youthful pop/rock band making their self-titled debut and, on the surface, it holds all the right pieces and jumps through the right hoops. But you already know where I'm headed. Similar bands like Relient K excel in these types of circumstances, with the heart-on-sleeve sentiments and jangling guitars. Me in Motion, on the other hand, can't quite get over the hump, however subjective that sounds. "See Justice Love Mercy" repeats every familiar refrain in the genre. Lead single "Losers" brings nothing new to the table, even though it's fine enough. Sure, "Welcome To Your Life" injects a raw energy into the affair, but it's a little too late at this point. ~~[CENTRICITY] MATT CONNER~~

LUMINATE
S/T

The latest EP from Luminate is filled with the emotional straightforward delivery of several other rock radio acts dominating the charts, so you can stop searching for anything new right off the bat. That being said, the Tyler, Texas five-piece soars and swells in all the right places. With fist-raised choruses and harmonies on arena-dreaming tracks like "Spirit of Love" and "Hear Our Cry," it's clear the aims are quite large for both band and label. Think a young, yearning Delirious?, especially on the latter. Elsewhere, bleeding heart tunes like "Miracle" are smart to rely on vocalist Sam Hancock because he's just that good. By the time "Fearlessly" closes the door, you're ready for another quick spin – a smart move to keep things short and simple on this disc. ~~[SPARROW] MATT CONNER~~

THE LETTER BLACK
HANGING ON BY A THREAD

The Evanescence comparisons should have gone out the window upon first listen to The Letter Black's introductory EP on Tooth & Nail. But in case some allusions to the band's former sound (when they were known as Breaking the Silence) remain, the band's new full-length, *Hanging On By A Thread*, should completely shed the skin for the hard rock five-piece. From the opening torrid grooves of "Fire With Fire" and thunderous percussion/guitar combo on "Invisible," to Sarah Anthony's seamless ability to change gears from the tender to tenacious, The Letter Black intends on making a dramatic new stamp on their potential audience. For the most part, the new mix works great and Tooth & Nail should have a long-lasting addition on their hands. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] MATT CONNER~~

NOT TO REASON WHY
WOULD YOU HUG FIRE?

Imagine lying in a field looking at the night sky thinking about how beautiful the stars are. Not To Reason Why brings the perfect sound to help enhance that experience. The band's sophomore release, *Would You Hug Fire?,* presents mellow melodies mixed with piano, guitar, drums and bits of strings throughout the album. Though the four-piece band creates music that contains no lyrics, the instruments speak for themselves by falling into place at the right time when following each other. On their last track "Ancients," it starts off with low-end guitars setting the song to be dark and bold then ending with a daring clash of roller-coaster piano scales, loud symbol splashing and high-guitar feedback leading into a vocal cadence that slowly whispers the song into silence. ~~[1912] DANIEL GARCIA~~

WOLVES AMONG SLEEP

LIONS. TIGERS. BEARS.

A breath of fresh air would describe Wolves Among Sleep. Lyrically speaking this band gives a raw and uncut voice in the sense that all glory to God is a must. In a world that is filled with darkness, WAS gives the reminder that God is in control and is always giving out his helping hand. The sound they bring on the EP *Lions. Tigers. Bears.* can be related to Beloved with a splash of newer Norma Jean. They label themselves the genre shimmycore, which mixes rock, pop and hardcore. Though clean vocals exist, the madness is brought with raspy metal-style vocals. Hardcore kids can relax because there are breakdowns in this album along with sing-along chants. Besides having poor audio quality, the album closely satisfies to an average level. ~~[BLUE DUCK] DANIEL GARCIA~~

SAFE HAVEN

IN THE MIDDLE OF DESTRUCTION

Don't be fooled by the red mohawk on the cover of Safe Haven's album *In the Middle of Destruction*. With pop-rock guitars and choruses that are hard not to sing along to, the California-based band have come a long way since their first show in a garage. Having the production help of Zach Lind from Jimmy Eat World insured that their second album release would contain good sound quality. Though not much musical skill is required to play their songs, you might catch yourself humming their tunes. First-time listeners might consider Safe Haven as just another rock worship band but perhaps the fact that they sponsor a Guatemalan orphanage and travel there out of their own pocket will make this band stand out from the rest. ~~[LIVE LOVE] DANIEL GARCIA~~

ORTOLAN

TIME ON A STRING

As perhaps implied by the label's name, it's tempting to think of all the acts on Sounds Familyre Records as one big musical family, all related by the Lord, bloodlines and aesthetics. Ortolan (named for a tiny singing bird), are the girl group of the clan. And, conveniently enough, they're a quartet of actual siblings. Following last year's rewarding, eponymously-titled introductory EP, the gals' full-length debut positions them somewhere between the harmony-singing female-led pop of the early '60s and the distaff post-punk with a lineage from The Raincoats to Cryptacize. There's about as much fun going on in *Time On A String* as there are darker – or at least more curious – emotions and observations. The whimsy that gleefully affects much of what Danielson touches resides in these New Jersey siblings, but Ortolan are definitely second-generation acolytes, with their own agenda to air. And here they do so in such a way as to whet a healthy appetite for whatever may come next. ~~[SOUNDS FAMILYRE] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

MICHAEL PHILLIPS

MIRRORS WITHIN MIRRORS

This long-time shredder has played with Deliverance in their post-*Weapons.../* Bowiesque era, as well as Fasedown with Jim Chaffin. This is his first real solo album where the constraints of a band are stripped away and he's free to wail (though Chaffin does play the drums here). Melodic, sweeping epic tunes are the modus operandi, with a few forays into flamenco playing. Two suites ("Mirrors Within Mirrors Pt. 1" and "...Pt. 2") offer some progressive diversity, clocking in at 9:33 and 15:41 respectively. Jimmy Brown adds some guest vocals in the second suite, while Ultimatum's Scott Waters adds his growl to the cover of "It's The Beat" and a whole bunch of folks chime in for "I Will Praise Him Still" at the end. It's a good sounding album that shows off his talents without getting too self-indulgent. ~~[ROXX] DOUG VAN PELT~~

NEWWORLDSON

S/T

Releasing their sophomore album, Newworldson is prepared to jump back on the scene with their style of funk, soul, rock and gospel. The Canadian-based band on this album dared to take a further step in music on hoping to reach out to other multi-culture backgrounds. In order for this to happen, Newworldson received musical help from Jamaican frontman Mark Mohr from Christafari and the Toronto Mass Choir. Frontman Joel Parisien made comments on how their first release, *Salvation Salvation*, was focusing on the true roots of Gospel and Americana. Truly Newworldson can say "mission accomplished" to the goal of wanting this album to be different. The mood and attitude of the self-titled album is rejoicing in the way it feels, like a weight is being lifted off your shoulders and life will be okay. Each song can fit different sceneries such as hanging out in a coffee shop, riding off in the sunset or getting down in church to that Southern Baptist gospel organ music. ~~[INPOP] DANIEL GARCIA~~

ANTIDEMON

SATANICHAOS

We all know as Christians how much the devil is a loser. AntiDemon's release of *Satanichaos* is filled with devil-hating lyrics and artwork. Their front cover consists of the satanic goat head with a cross stabbed into it to show that Christ overcomes evil. The band brings good meaning to the death metal scene with deep growling vocals and not-being-able-to-read-their-band-logo. There is not much to be said about the musical quality of this album. The average death metal fan might enjoy the same looping guitar riffs and bland drumming but after the second or fourth track they might get bored and dread the fact there are 15 tracks left. However kudos should be given for their attitude and the fact of their drummer being a female. ~~[MCK] DANIEL GARCIA~~

GUNGOR

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

Gungor's follow-up to their Brash Music worship rock debut couldn't be any more striking or unexpected. *Ancient Skies* featured beautiful epic worship tracks and given how such emotional songs dominate the scene, it's easy to think they'd only continue. Yet it seems namesake Michael Gungor was more creative than we thought. The long intro to "Dry Bones" is dark, inventive and compelling in its invitation to something mysterious. The Burlap-to-Cashmere guitar tendencies give way to rock-opera style cues and the trend continues on the title track, with stunning strings and lilting piano that only gets better as it goes. The childlike playfulness on "The Earth is Yours" is simply fantastic, while the somber acoustics of "Please Be My Strength" earns Jon Foreman comparisons. If anything, Gungor might just have set the benchmark for worship in the next decade with their latest, *Beautiful Things*. ~~[BRASH MUSIC] MATT CONNER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Wolves Among Sleep *Lions. Tigers. Bears.*	03	03
Safe Haven *In The Middle Of Destruction*	03	03
Ortolan *Time On A String*	03	04
Michael Phillips *Mirrors Within Mirrors*	03	
Newworldson *S/T*	03*	04
Antidemon *Satanichaos*	03	02
Gungor *Beautiful Things*	03*	05
Woe Of Tyrants *Kingdom Of Might*	04	
Handel's Messiah Rocks *A Joyful Noise*	02*	
Creed *Live (DVD)*	03	
Debtor *Deliverance*	03	03
Sleeping At Last *Storyboards*	04*	
Above The Golden State *The Golden Rule*	03	03
Queens Club *Young Giant*	03	03
I'm Ok You're Ok *Presents...*	03	02*
Secret And Whisper *Teenage Fantasy*	04	04*

WOE OF TYRANTS
KINGDOM OF MIGHT

Preferring to let their light shine via their music, instead of promoting themselves as a "Christian metal band," this amazing quintet from Chillicoth, Ohio is a shredding machine of epic power, brutal death and technical metal. Tough, high-end shouts juxtapose with chomping lower-register growls, but it's the tight, precise drumming and rhythm section that is danced upon by the twin guitars of Matt Kincaid and Chris Burns that really shine the brightest here. In other words, their chops and skill are as impressive as the knockout punch of power they bring. Metalheads, say hello to your new best friend. [METAL BLADE] DOUG VAN PELT

LIVING SACRIFICE
THE INFINITE ORDER (DVD)

This DVD shows a look behind the scenes during the recording process of *The Infinite Order*. It displays the setup of what was used and also the humorous side of the legendary Christian metal band. Viewers will see appearances of the guest vocalists that appeared on the album. Along with the studio footage are two live concert performances of "Bloodwork" and "Symbiotic." [SOLID STATE] DANIEL GARCIA

HANDEL'S MESSIAH ROCKS
A JOYFUL NOISE

The premise of this album is both frightening and promising. If performed with a kind of "this is what we think kids will like" mentality that so many church musicals with a (zero) "hip mentality" are crafted with, then it would be an effort in bombastic dreadfulness. If it were done with the goal of musical excellence in mind, then it could soar (even if at best it were a copy of TSO). Turns out there's a little of both. Some moments are a tad tiresome and don't translate well; and some moments shine brilliantly, with tasteful arrangements that borrow well from the original melodies and the rock palette. The second-to last "Hallelujah" is one such high point. [INTEGRITY] DOUG VAN PELT

CREED
LIVE (DVD)

Having seen the band on its *Human Clay* and *Weathered* tours at this DVD's venue/location (as well as watching the live webcast of this show), it's interesting to contrast the performances. This one is captured with multiple and close-up cameras, is mixed great and captures a better performance than the *Weathered* tour, but pales in comparison to the intensity of the *Human Clay* show. A band beyond its prime that still sounds good, but is somewhat visually challenged. [WIND-UP] DOUG VAN PELT

DEBTOR
DELIVERANCE

I was thrown off by the album cover that Debtor would be another metalcore band, but instead they bring back the old-school hardcore sound. You know the deal: constant circle pit drumming, guitars switching fast between four power chords and the singer sounding like he or she is under three feet tall with high-pitched yelling lyrics. Immediately *Deliverance* starts its engine with the drumming pattern where the guitar players can jump up and down to get the audience hyped up. The album contains eight songs with 2:49 being the longest track. Like a lot of real old-school hardcore bands, the music contains no talent but that is made up for by their strong messages. When listening to Debtor, it's clear they don't hold back what's on their heart. Fans of Comeback Kid, Stretch Arm Strong and xLOOKING FORWARDx will mostly enjoy this band's debut album. [BLOOD & INK] DANIEL GARCIA

SLEEPING AT LAST
STORYBOARDS

This is both a heart-stopping and heart-warming album. Accompanied by sometimes atmospheric guitars, the occasional string section (in the epic almost-showtime "Clockwork"), Sleeping At Last's frontman Ryan O'Neal's soft yet strong and mesmerizing vocals make for a pleasant musical journey. Think of the accessibility of The Fray's lush sounds and the simple story songs of Thom Yorke and his band. The arrangements are compelling enough to stop a prog-rock aficionado in his tracks, and the dreamy soundscapes and vocals can swoon and sweep a female viewer of *Grey's Anatomy* off her feet and overpower her single-buying musical habits enough to warrant buying the entire album. It's that good. [TO A RED KITE] DOUG VAN PELT

ABOVE THE GOLDEN STATE
THE GOLDEN RULE

The new EP from Above the Golden State starts with the same echoes their 2008 self-titled debut radiated – with an undeniable Switchfoot-like homage complete with "oh-oh-oh" refrains and West Coast references. "The Golden Rule," the collection's title track, sounds more *Legend of Chin* than *Hello Hurricane*, but it's all the sweetly surfy nonetheless. Drum programming and darker guitar tones help "Chance to Love" break the SoCal sound throughout and provide the disc's best song. "Real You" brings the frenetic fun and "Teach Us" performs a good Leeland impersonation. "I Am Loved" keeps Euro-sweeps and swells in the back while Michael Watson sings of God's love. In the end, these six songs presented here remind me again why ATGS is one of the more promising bands on the scene. [SPARROW] MATT CONNOR

QUEENS CLUB
YOUNG GIANT

Contradiction likely drives some of the the creative tension behind Queens Club. Their singing and combination of angular guitar jangle with 4/4 beats and splashes of electronics come off as English, but their Kansas City hometown couldn't be much more middle American. No fashion victim clothes horses they, but the post-punky power-pop rock-disco these guys proffer conjures visions of nattily dressed clubgoers nearly drowning in their own ironies. That last image contrasts with the coded language of young adult morality tales found on *Young Giants*. It's nearly all consistently bracing and anthemic in its frequent shoutiness, if not always immediately accessible melodies. Anyone already enjoying music along the continuum that includes The Arctic Monkeys, *Hot Fuss*-era Killers, Franz Ferdinand, The Strokes, The Cult and Family Force 5 (minus the goofiness) probably won't regret taking on these *Giants*. [TOOTH & NAIL] JAMIE LEE RAKE

I'M OK YOU'RE OK
PRESENTS…

Having been influenced by bands such as Saves the Day, Cartel, Paramore and Anberlin, I'm Ok You're Ok have introduced themselves to the music scene of punk rock. Their first release *Presents…* contains songs that range from a pop-punkish feel to straight-up rock. The majority of the album contains tracks that have already been done by so many other bands. It lacks originality that could cause dust to collect on the jewel case it comes in. However, the last two tracks "Running Circles" and "Compromiser" shine some light for the band. Even though they sound like Blink-182 doing a cover song of 3 Doors Down, it will relax the tension from sitting through 90% of the record. [DREAM] DANIEL GARCIA

SECRET AND WHISPER
TEENAGE FANTASY

In the dream, my friends and I flew around the universe in Tie Fighters, shooting other flying things and drinking Coca-Cola. After wrestling with words to describe this album, that did it for me: *Teenage Fantasy* reminds me of being an invincible kid, and of discovering the harsher realities as life progresses. There's this all-encompassing sound that's reflective of subject matter: threatening and bold, scared and defeated, dreamy and pseudo-schizo. Name-brand SAW with notable, structural-songwriting maturity, I think they just created a near-perfect, conceptual masterpiece of a record. Catchy melodies, all-over-the-place instrumentation weirdness and a more experimental push … all the right ingredients and the long wait between albums is beyond well worth it. [TOOTH & NAIL] LEVI MACALLISTER

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-First)

In this series we've been exploring answers as to why millions of American Evangelicals have produced so few examples of quality art in any artistic category, seeing first that in large part this is because of limited (or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of its teachings), despite the fact that Scripture instructs Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), which necessarily includes the making of art.

We've also looked at the negative effects of shallow or distorted views of the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which lead to denigrations of the physical world and time as proper theaters of God's Purposes, encouraging a pessimism about history, seeing it as Satan's realm which must be escaped from instead of redeemed and fulfilled.

We looked as well at the results of sub-Scriptural perspectives on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, seeing that misunderstandings or rejections of the Three Persons of the One God destroy the possibility of any Scriptural justification of symbols being revelatory of both multiple meanings and unified meaning at the same time.

Trinitarian confusion leads to muddled ideas as well of the reflected Mystery of the Image of God in men, to views of men as simplistic machines subject to quick-fix techniques, and to man as being incapable of reflecting God in multi-faceted ways, resulting in overly simplistic representations in artforms.

Last issue, we began a consideration of the implications of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ, which teaches us that Jesus was both fully God and fully Man simultaneously, with no confusion between His Natures, both of which co-inhered to form One Person in a great Mystery. We saw that this Truth, that God has eternally joined Himself to a human body, soul and spirit means that God not only is not opposed to matter, but that matter was made for, and inescapably involves, spiritual expression.

We also saw that this concept of Incarnation, that matter and spirit were made for each other, as evidenced in the Divine/Human Christ Jesus, was scandalous in Christ's Time on earth, as it violated the dualistic belief of neo-Platonism (the dominant worldview of the Classical era) that matter and spirit were opposed to each other, and were incompatible with each other.

Unfortunately, this basic idea of dualism, that spirit is superior to and incompatible with the material world, and was imported into the Church by educated converts who misread both Scripture and the world in neo-Platonic terms, even though they believed in the Biblical Revelation of Jesus' Divine/Human Incarnation. Not considering the implications of the Incarnation, their dualism resulted in a withdrawal from the "sin-infected" physical world as much as possible, which was the mainspring of the growth of ascetic monasticism.

Throughout the Church's history, dualism and Incarnationalism have struggled for dominance among believers, and in the aftermath of the Reformation, Pietism arose and adopted dualism as its view of the world, injecting it into the Evangelical Church, where it has become the primary perspective of American Evangelicals.

This has led Evangelicals in their theology, experience and art, to emphasize only "spiritual" aspects of life, things like prayer, worship, evangelism, etc., and to de-emphasize as unspiritual or unimportant the regular, quotidian things of life, things like work, politics, economics and so forth, seeing them as areas which were only important if explicitly "spiritual" themes could be foisted upon them.

The arts, seen as being too sensual and worldly, were reduced to the status of propaganda. Their only real justification being to function as glorified gospel tracts, with music being privileged, since worship services require songs. But dance, architecture, acting, all the more visceral and physical arts, came to be largely viewed with suspicion, relegated to the realm of the "secular," as being so worldly that they were only possibly "spiritual," and likely not "spiritual," so were ignored and distrusted.

Are these sub-spiritual arenas? Are they less spiritual than prayer? Are there more and less spiritual aspects of life? How does the Incarnation answer these questions? Lord willing, we'll examine these questions next issue…

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

Have you ever had "one of those days?" You know the ones. You wake up a little "off" and go out to your car only to find you left the lights on all night and it will not start. By the time you make it to work/school you are late and you have missed something important. Since you were in a rush you forgot to bring the lunch you packed the night before and instead skip it (never a good idea). Then someone comes by and makes a snide comment about your performance so far today. Let's take stock of your day so far: You're feeling some pressure, the stomach is rumbling and everyone around you is potentially really annoying. Into this setting the Apostle Paul has this to say:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:4-7]

Sometimes I read that and think: "Oh barf. Is he serious? Does he know what kind of day I am having?" He doesn't even pose this as a suggestion! Paul simply states "Rejoice. Always." He clearly has no idea how hard my life can be sometimes.

Paul writes this letter from prison where he awaits his execution. His crime, as far as I can tell, it was just the fact he couldn't stop telling people about Jesus. According to church tradition he was beheaded a short time later. He was writing to a people who, by all accounts, loved God and followed Jesus. They too must have been persecuted because at this time Christianity was illegal. Paul, who knew hard times, tells the people of Philippi to celebrate in Christ! No matter their circumstances, they are to rejoice as they are an example to all in gentleness, trusting God in everything and they are given a peace that we cannot comprehend.

We have never had it so easy. Our lives are sometimes complicated, but rarely is our life at risk. These people who bravely stood up for Christ are our example. We too can embrace the challenges in life and choose to rejoice in everything. This small act would serve as an example to everyone around us that we are truly followers of Christ.

Devotions
with Greg Tucker

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.
—1 Corinthians 11:28

Minutes before officiating a wedding in Southern California, a horrified event coordinator ran to my side and blurted out, "The elements! I forgot to buy elements for the couple's first Communion!"

Elements in that church meant bread and grape juice. I peeked into the auditorium and sure enough, on a small table sat one empty cup and one empty plate. No elements. To make matters worse, a survey of the backstage room produced little more than a Snickers bar and a can of Sprite.

Like baptism and marriage itself, Holy Communion is a sacrament in the Christian church. That means, to paraphrase legendary anchorman Ron Burgundy, it's kind of a big deal. The idea of pulling The Lord's Supper out of a snack machine was unsettling, but our options had run out. So with the couple's permission (and my silent decision to cash their check immediately), that's what we did.

Years later the topic of wedding traditions came up, and my friend Kenneth Grider shared his objection to Communion being offered exclusively to a bride and groom. Now, Kenneth helped translate the NIV, so I take his thoughts seriously. In the course of conversation I shared about my near-disastrous incident, and waited for his assessment. After a moment of thoughtful silence Kenneth responded, "Then I think everyone in the room should have had Snickers and Sprite."

We love our traditions, don't we? When Jesus initiated the original Lord's Supper in Luke 22, he took the bread and cup then instructed, "When you do this, do it in remembrance of me." Surely his emphasis was on the word remembrance, and not this. "This" in the equation can change. "This" could be macaroni and water — or anything else, I suppose — unless we're doing it to be gimmicky.

Using less than ideal elements can never strip Holy Communion of its power, when all Jesus asked in the first place was that we remember Him. One thing's for sure: He remembers us.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com and is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills. You can write him at TuckerG@mac.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

In Process
This in-your-face metal band reminds me of the Fear Factory album *Obsolete*. The guitar sound quality is raw and ecstatic with simple yet open and first metal power chords. Good message but has one swear word. (Daniel Garcia)
myspace.com/inprocessfin

☆ Intohimo
Could easily fit on a tour with Underoath and The Devil Wears Prada. Switches back and forth with singing and screaming to a hard alternative sound. (DG)
myspace.com/intohimo

Counterfeit i
Very experimental program-sounding beats mixed with single guitar-string melodies. Imagine NIN and Deftones being tossed in a blender. (DG)
myspace.com/counterfeiti

Texas Casket Co.
Old-school California punk sound. The Ramones with some edge. (DG)
ludeboy67@hotmail.com

Don't Wake Aislin
Catchy alternative melodies with relaxing female vocals. Can be compared to Flyleaf and newer Project 86. (DG)
myspace.com/dontwakeaislin

☆ Rob Johnson
Insane guitar solo work. It's like going on a roller coaster of every major, minor, harmonic and melodic scale known to man. (DG)
myspace.com/robjohnsonguitar

Ryan Costello
Chilled relaxing acoustic folk music. Slight hints of Southern twang and electric organ. (DG)
ryancostello.com

The Shiny Darks
Fast and hyper punk rock. Circle-pit drumming and classic repetitive punk riffs. (DG)
theshinydarks.com

Etched In Red
Heavy nu-metal with exciting vocals on the hard and soft side. Some lyrics may be sensitive for some listeners. (DG)
etchedinred.com

I Am The Messenger
Solid hardcore rock with a The Devil Wears Prada influence. Breakdowns reminded me of older Norma Jean. (DG)
myspace.com/iamthemessengeronline

Ghost of the Machine
Amazing well-structured metalcore harmonizing with Haste The Day and As I Lay Dying guitar and drum work. (DG)
gotmpa@gmail.com

Willet
Post-hardcore with a steady uptempo beat. A band with an important message and heartfelt attitude. (DG)
willetonline.com

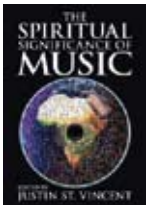
Writ On Water
Hip and relaxed ambient tracks. Vocals have a misty reverb sound effect that goes well with the music. (DG)
writonwater.com

ZOMBIELAND
Our columnist, Kemper Crabb, demanded that I see this, but I missed it until it came out on DVD. I missed out on the 30' wide gore on the big screen, but was still able to laugh and guffaw at the immeasurable and ridiculous humor in this kill 'em all flick. The re-cameo of Bill Murray in the credits is possibly the best moment. [Columbia Pictures] *Doug Van Pelt*
[Cuss: 37 | Gore: 120 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 40]

PIRATE RADIO
Nobody seems to over-romanticize rock and roll better than Philip Seymour Hoffman. Like Almost Famous, the flick takes the pulse of an early "classic" era of rock where sex, drugs and rebellion against a mistrusting older generation were part of its fabric. A young man's coming of age happens in this moral vacuum, but a few lessons in family bonds and material possessions are explored, too. [Universal] *DV*
[Cuss: 22 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 3 | Spiritual Conversations: 50]

NO GREATER LOVE
This film weaves a tale of redemption found in Christ with a broken marriage that promises healing when a wife/mother disappears for a decade into crack addiction, hits rock bottom and then finds healing. When her long, lost husband discovers her back in his world, everything gets rocked. The challenge of putting their family back together draws on lots of good tension. [Lionsgate] *DV*
[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSIC
JUSTIN ST. VINCENT
This somewhat scholastic book collects dozens of interviews from a wide variety of sources (professional musicans, teachers and the like) – from Bolt Thrower to Eyehategod to Demon Hunter and Mortification throw in their two cent's worth on the unique subject of music and its curious properties. [xtrememusic.org] *DV*

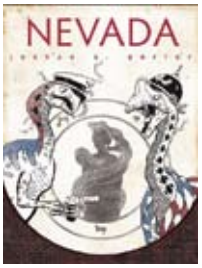


HEAR NO EVIL | MATTHEW PAUL TURNER
Hear No Evil: My Story of Innocence, Music, and the Holy Ghost is exactly what it sounds like; Matthew Paul Turner's coming-of-age story with music as the backdrop. Turner shares his testimony in an awe-inspiring and personal sort of way. He invites you to follow him along his musical and spiritual journey, all while being honest and often times hilarious. For example, his many stories of being classified as the rebel in an all-Baptist family. This book encourages you to sing your own song of hope and write your own life's soundtrack. I really enjoyed this book, because it captures the true essence of who Turner really is and at the same time every story he shares is completely relatable to anyone living in today. It was hard to put down this collection of his description of growing up in America's evangelical subculture. [WaterBrook Press] *Kaela Van Pelt*

GROOVEMAKER
Available through iTunes is this killer app that can make even the most non-tech-savvy person into a groove-kicking DJ. The neatest thing about this app is the layout that does not contain a hundred buttons to push like a normal DJ pad would. It comes with pre-loaded loops and sound effects that are not lame and are promised to keep your head bobbing. With an easy layout and sleek design, you are in control with the beat of the music with your finger tip. [itunes.com/griffin] *Daniel Garcia*
[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: $00]

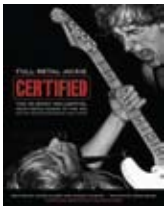
VERIZON WIRELESS MIFI

This tiny device is not only a wireless broadband ISP "modem," but also a five-device router that connects fairly effortlessly to most any wifi device (desktop, notebook, xbox). Within a solid coverage area it delivers as promised. The initial setup process likely involves a phone call to tech support, but is pretty painless. In a low signal area, it'll crawl slightly faster than dial-up, allowing users to share search engine browsing and e-mail (but forget about downloading or streaming a video or song). You can feel the pull of the sharing devices when the signal is low, but not so much when you're in a good coverage zone. It won't keep a charge during use for too long, so it's not a workday solution for constant internet (unless you leave it plugged into the wall). [verizonwireless.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: B+ | Performance: A- | Price: $99* (w/2-year service agreement)]



NEVADA | JOSHUA S. PORTER
Lead vocalist of Showbread, Joshua S. Porter, brings his sophomore novel release about a discovery that could bring the world to an end. The writing style reminded me of a Quentin Tarantino film where you are able to see the plot through different characters involved with the movie. Although this book contains gore and some sexual content, it was definitely a page turner for me and well worth reading to the last page.
[joshdies.wordpress.com] *Daniel Garcia*

CERTIFIED | FULL METAL JACKIE



This disc-jockey-turned-journalist has interviewed countless metal musicians over the years and her passion for '80s metal and her experience working alongside her metal heroes gave her keen insight into their songs. The long sub-title says it all: *Full Metal Jackie Certified: The 50 Most Influential Heavy Metal Songs of the '80s and the True Stories Behind Their Lyrics*. It was fascinating to hear the artists talk about the creative process for the music and the lyrics. Thankfully, both Stryper and King's X are covered here (with "More Than A Man" and "Over My Head") in honesty and detail, along with the usual suspects, like Judas Priest, Metallica, Slayer, Dio, Sabbath. Like most rock journalism, there's plenty of rough language amidst the thoughtful stories. [Course Technology] *DV*

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"Steve Scott is a unique individual with a deep understanding and love of Scripture and a passion for the arts."
-Steve Turner, author of The Gospel According to the Beatles

"If you are an artist, or a pastor, or interested in art, read and digest this book."
-Kemper Crabb, HM Magazine

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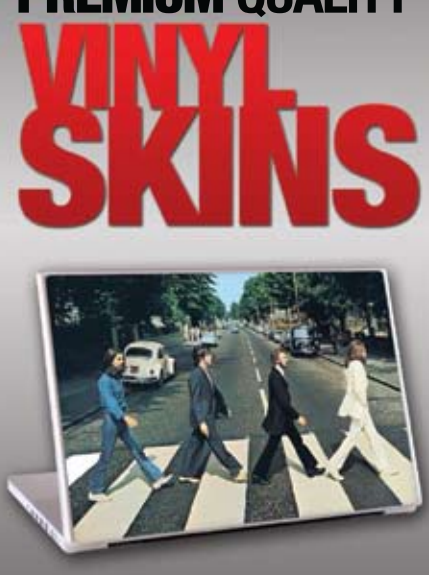

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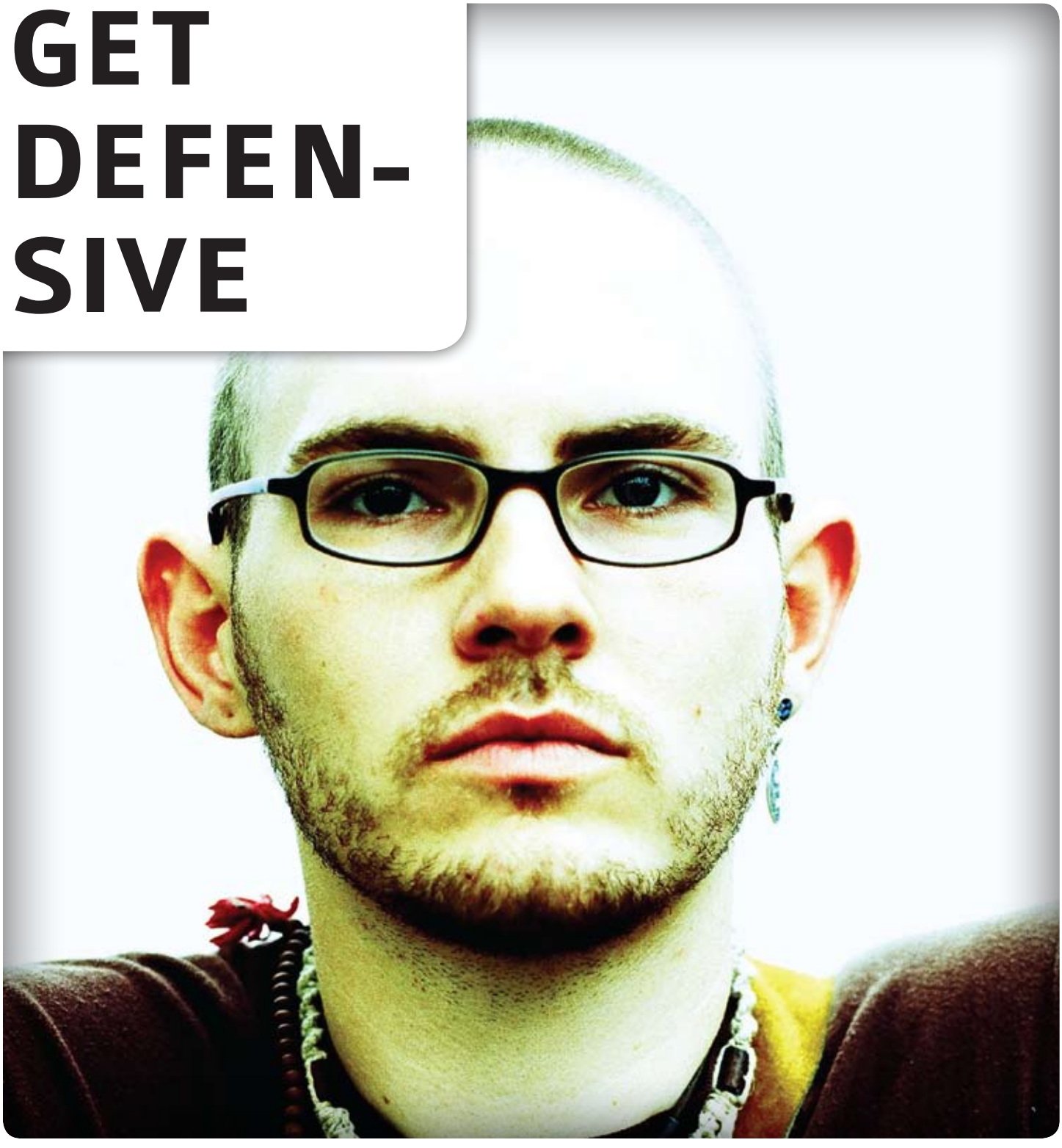

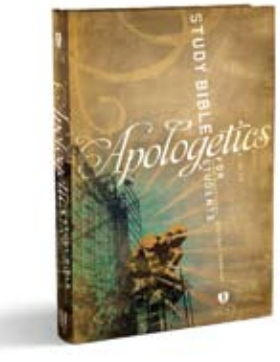

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